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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

# Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

*Summary*

The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 69/157 on the rights of the child, in which it requested the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to continue to submit reports to the Assembly on the activities undertaken in the fulfilment of her mandate and on the progress achieved in advancing the children and armed conflict agenda. The report covers the period from August 2014 to July 2015. It describes trends, select issues of concern and progress made over the past year, including the mainstreaming of child protection issues within the United Nations system. It also provides information on the field visits of the Special Representative, on her engagement with regional organizations and international partners and on dialogue with parties to conflict. It outlines a number of challenges and priorities in her agenda and concludes with a set of recommendations to enhance the protection of children affected by conflict.

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 69/157, the General Assembly requested the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to continue to submit reports on the activities undertaken in the fulfilment of her mandate, including information on her field visits, progress made and challenges faced on the children and armed conflict agenda. The request stemmed from the mandate given by the Assembly in its resolution 51/77, in which it recommended that the Special Representative raise awareness and promote the collection of information about the plight of children affected by armed conflict, and that the Special Representative foster international cooperation to ensure respect for children's rights in such situations. In line with that mandate, and as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 69/157, the present report provides an update on the "Children, not soldiers" campaign. It also highlights progress made over the past year and outlines the immediate priorities, as well as a longer-term vision, to advance the children and armed conflict agenda in collaboration with Member States, United Nations entities, regional and subregional organizations and civil society.

# II. Taking stock of the children and armed conflict agenda

## A. Overview of trends and challenges

2. The reporting period was marked by acute periods of violence that added to existing challenges from protracted conflicts. Cyclical spikes and unrelenting violence have resulted in widespread grave violations against children in nearly all situations on the children and armed conflict agenda. In many situations, conflicts continued to be characterized by extreme violence and sectarian, religious or ethnic divisions. In a number of countries, intense armed conflicts took place in dense urban environments, leading to a significant loss of life among children. Such conflicts have challenged the response capacity of national authorities and the international community.

3. Extreme violence was a prevalent feature of conflicts in 2014 and continued into 2015. That lead to a dramatic increase in grave violations against children, who were disproportionately affected and were often the direct targets of acts of violence intended to cause maximum civilian casualties, terrorize entire communities and provoke outrage worldwide. Schools in particular were targeted by extremist groups. In many situations, the regional or international responses to security threats have also posed child protection challenges.

4. In the latter part of the reporting period, a number of situations deteriorated significantly, with those in South Sudan and Yemen worsening to a significant degree. In South Sudan, an already dire situation, which followed the eruption of conflict in December 2013, deteriorated even further. In a period of only three weeks in May 2015, approximately 130 children from Unity State were killed, with reports indicating that they had been subjected to brutal sexual violence and/or killed based on their ethnicity or had been recruited and used. In Yemen, heavy aerial bombardments since the end of March 2015 have dramatically increased the number of child casualties in an already highly precarious environment. All parties to the

conflict on the ground in Yemen have engaged in widespread child recruitment since the conflict intensified.

5. Incidents of abduction of children rose significantly and were perpetrated increasingly on a wide scale by extremist groups. In Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, for instance, more than 1,000 girls and boys were abducted by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In one incident in Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic, ISIL abducted approximately 150 young boys on their way home after their school exams. The abductions were in addition to the numerous mass abductions committed by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS), more commonly known as Boko Haram, in north-eastern Nigeria over the past few years. Many other parties to conflict also committed abductions, including in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and South Sudan.

6. The information gathered by the Office of the Special Representative, through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, informed and galvanized international action on abductions during the reporting period. The data received demonstrate an increase in the frequency and scale of abductions, which has resulted in greater protection needs for children. The children require safe release, family tracing and medical and psychosocial assistance, and the facilitation of voluntary repatriation in the context of cross-border abductions.

7. The violations committed against children affected by conflict were compounded by sexual violence reportedly committed by foreign troops or peacekeepers in a number of situations of armed conflict. Grave violations against children by those entrusted to protect the population are particularly egregious; the perpetrators should be held to account.

8. The impact of conflict continued to be felt by children long after the most severe violence had subsided. Children were deprived of adequate services and shelter, and suffered the long-term physical and psychological scars of conflict. In Gaza, one year after the conflict, children's access to education, health care, and water and sanitation services remained hampered. Delays in the rebuilding of destroyed schools and homes constrained access by children to education, and some 100,000 people remained displaced. In the Central African Republic, thousands of children were still associated with parties to conflict, despite a few hundred having been released during the reporting period, in particular after the signature of a commitment by armed groups on 5 May 2015. Child protection actors on the ground face the ongoing challenge of receiving and assisting hundreds of children at short notice, as the mobilization of expertise and funding is required once political commitments have been gained.

9. The challenges outlined above notwithstanding, the present report highlights important new initiatives undertaken by the Special Representative and other child protection actors to improve the well-being of children living through conflict. Encouragingly, progress has been achieved: thousands of children have been released by parties to conflict; commitments have been issued by non-State armed groups; and agreements have been concluded with Governments on the handover of children separated from armed groups.

## B. Emerging issues and challenges

### New protection challenges posed by extreme violence

10. During the reporting period, extreme violence rose to an unprecedented level. The impact on children has multiplied in a number of countries, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria and the Syrian Arab Republic. Children were victims of grave violations and were often forced to witness or take part in beheadings, immolations and summary executions. They were also indoctrinated, recruited and forced to be suicide bombers or human shields. Girls were subjected to additional abuses, including sexual slavery, abduction and forced marriage. The violations often took place in the context of mass abductions. Such brutal tactics had severe repercussions on children, which will have lasting effects for generations to come.

11. Extremist groups have benefited from advances in technology, which have facilitated their rapid growth and led to the expansion of their territorial control, often across national borders. The military response to the threat has also raised protection challenges for children. Children caught in the middle of counter-terrorism operations have been killed and maimed and their homes and schools destroyed. In some cases, State-allied militias have been mobilized, resulting in boys and sometimes girls being used in support roles and even as combatants. Despite international calls for due process and respect for the rule of law, counter-terrorism operations often lack those elements. The Special Representative recalls that efforts to counteract extremist groups must be carried out in full compliance with international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law and must ensure that children are treated primarily as victims.

12. Prevention must complement any legal or military action to counteract extreme violence. Action is required by the international community, regional organizations and individual Member States to mobilize resources to build resilience and strengthen protective environments for children. Identifying and addressing the root causes and catalysts of extremism, such as poverty and the alienation of communities, is a necessary first step in the effort to find a lasting solution. Extremist groups also regularly recruit young people and children from around the world using propaganda on the Internet and social media. This is a new and compounding challenge, and is complex for Member States to address. The Special Representative notes that attention should be given to the recruitment networks of extremist groups, with the aim of preventing the recruitment of children in the first place. Education is one tool that can reduce the appeal of extremist groups and help to prevent social exclusion and promote respect for human rights, peace and diversity.

13. The reintegration of children associated with extremist groups poses challenges. Indoctrination and trauma from exposure to extreme violence make it more difficult for children to reintegrate into their former communities. The Special Representative calls upon the international community to prioritize developing specialized reintegration programmes to address the psychological harm experienced by children who are exposed to extreme violence.

### Children deprived of liberty in situations of armed conflict

14. The deprivation of liberty of children owing to their actual or alleged association with armed groups is a concern in nearly all country situations covered

by the Special Representative's mandate. It is particularly worrisome that the number of children arrested and detained in the context of counter-terrorism operations has increased significantly. In such contexts, but also in more traditional conflict settings, children are no longer seen as victims but are treated as security threats. In many cases, they are either held under the authority of military actors or are handed over to national security agencies that deprive them of their liberty for long periods. Children associated with parties to conflict should be treated as victims and handed over to child protection actors. In circumstances in which children are accused of a crime, any legal process should be conducted in compliance with due process and juvenile justice standards. Accordingly, the detention of children should always be a last resort, for the shortest time possible and guided by the best interests of the child. Those principles apply to any form of deprivation of liberty, be it detention under security charges, administrative detention or deprivation of liberty for the child's own protection or rehabilitation.

15. In order to ensure the adequate treatment of children separated from armed groups, the Special Representative advocated with the Member States concerned for standard operating procedures for the handover of children to child protection actors. In September 2014, the United Nations and the Government of Chad signed a protocol on the handover of children, which included specific provisions regulating detention. Those standard operating procedures build on previous agreements signed with the Governments of Mali, Somalia and Uganda in recent years. Child protection provisions have also been included in the concept of operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force to fight Boko Haram/JAS. The Special Representative encourages all Member States to develop such standard operating procedures where applicable to prevent the detention of children and protect their primary status as victims.

16. The Special Representative continued to advocate for the strengthening of legal frameworks to ensure the protection of children deprived of their liberty in times of conflict. To that end, the Special Representative participated in the consultation on the right to challenge the lawfulness of detention before courts, which was organized by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in Geneva in September 2014. The Office of the Special Representative also contributed to the draft basic principles and guidelines that the Working Group will submit to the Human Rights Council in 2015. The Special Representative anticipates that the documents will provide important guidance on addressing the issue of the detention of children in armed conflict.

17. The Special Representative welcomes General Assembly resolution 69/157 on the rights of the child, in which the Assembly invited the Secretary-General to commission an in-depth global study on children deprived of liberty. Her Office has taken part in the initial phase of and continues to contribute to the study, in close cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies and offices outlined in the resolution.

**Rights to education and health in situations of armed conflict**

18. The General Assembly has recognized that attacks on education and health-care facilities deprive millions of children of their rights to healthy lives and to learn and realize their potential. This not only has an immediate impact on children, but also affects the future prospects of societies. In line with its recent debates and resolutions on education in emergencies and attacks on medical facilities, the Assembly welcomed the issuance of the guidance note entitled "Protect schools and hospitals:

end attacks on education and health care" in May 2014, which was co-produced by the Special Representative and other organizations of the United Nations system. In her own efforts to promote the guidance note, the Special Representative attended a workshop on the protection of schools and hospitals in January 2015 in Berlin at the invitation of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Prevention of the violation of the rights to education and health was also supported by the Security Council through its resolutions 1998 (2011), 2143 (2014) and 2225 (2015), in which the Council urged all parties to conflict to respect the civilian character of schools and to refrain from actions that impeded children's access to education and health care.

19. The accountability of those who attack schools and hospitals is a key aspect of prevention. The Special Representative appreciates the importance conferred to the protection of education and health of children by Member States and reiterates her call to them to consider, where needed, changes in national policies, military procedures and legislation. Those who deliberately target schools and hospitals must be investigated and prosecuted.

20. In its resolution 2225 (2015), the Security Council also encouraged Member States to take concrete measures to deter the military use of schools by armed forces and armed groups. In that regard, the Special Representative welcomes the adoption by 37 countries of the Safe Schools Declaration on 29 May 2015, which endorsed the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. An additional 10 countries have adopted the Declaration since its launch. Although the Guidelines are not legally binding, they highlight good practice for all parties to conflict and aim to provide guidance to reduce the impact of armed conflict on education, particularly in relation to military use.

21. The Special Representative underlines the continuing importance of efforts to protect education in conflict situations, such as the dedication of the Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, the work of the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, the No Lost Generation initiative by the United Nations and its partners for children affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Oslo Summit on Education for Development, the Incheon Declaration, the planned data hub project by Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict on global attacks on education, and the Children of Peace initiative of the European Union. With 39 million children and adolescents deprived of education owing to conflict and internal and cross-border displacement, however, those efforts are only a small step towards the goal of safeguarding universal education for those affected by conflict.

22. Ensuring access to education and health care for children in conflict and for displaced children must be a priority. The General Assembly will be endorsing the sustainable development goals at its seventieth session. In the implementation of the goals, the Special Representative urges Member States to prioritize addressing the impact of conflict on the rights of children to education and health.

## III. Dialogue, commitments and action plans with parties to conflict: update on the "Children, not soldiers" campaign

23. The "Children, not soldiers" campaign was launched in March 2014 jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with the goal of ending the

recruitment and use of children by government forces by the end of 2016. Support for the campaign by Member States, regional organizations, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and civil society partners has been strong. Seven of the eight Governments listed in the annexes to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for recruitment and use of children have signed or recommitted to action plans with the United Nations. Only the Government of the Sudan is yet to sign an action plan, but discussions with the United Nations are ongoing.

24. The signature of an action plan is the first step towards delisting; it must be followed by the separation and release of children associated with armed forces or groups and the implementation of measures to prevent further recruitment of children. Ending impunity for those who commit grave violations is also a crucial part of efforts to protect children from recruitment and use. Children separated from parties to conflict also require reintegration into their families and communities, which needs a long-term financial commitment. The first year of the campaign resulted in progress through the delisting of the Chadian National Army and notable advances in the implementation of the action plans in other countries.

25. The Special Representative undertook a number of initiatives to galvanize support and action for the goals of the campaign. In New York in September 2014, at the invitation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Special Representative moderated a ministerial level round table on the margins of the General Assembly to share experiences and discuss the next steps in the implementation of the campaign. Also in September 2014, the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF collaborated with a number of non-governmental organizations to organize a one-day workshop on ways to support the campaign and the implementation of action plans at the national level.

26. In December 2014, the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights and Committee on Foreign Affairs held a special hearing on the campaign. The Special Representative briefed parliamentarians on the progress of the campaign and highlighted challenges and ways for the European Union to provide support. In Geneva, the Special Representative held a consultative workshop with the non-governmental organization Focus Group on Children Affected by Armed Conflict to take stock of the progress of the campaign and lessons learned in the countries concerned. The non-governmental organization was updated when the Special Representative travelled to Geneva in March 2015 to present her report to the Human Rights Council. In February 2015, two ambassadorial level luncheons were co-hosted with UNICEF and the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to mobilize political support for the campaign among Member States. The campaign has also reached out to regional organizations to mobilize expertise, advocacy and capacity-building support.

27. The efforts to assist the implementation of the action plans complemented efforts of partners in the field and led to a significant reduction in verified cases of recruitment by listed national forces, in particular in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar. Each country took steps in developing the legal frameworks and structures to ensure the prohibition of and accountability for the recruitment and use of children in national forces.

28. In Afghanistan, a presidential decree criminalizing the recruitment of children under 18 years of age was ratified in the early part of 2015, and a directive

prohibiting the use of children, including in support roles, and outlining sanctions for perpetrators was issued and disseminated. Pilot child protection units in the national police in four provinces also reportedly prevented more than 400 children from enlisting, indicating the potential for considerable impact if such units are replicated across the country. Expanding the pilot child protection units to other areas was highlighted to the Government of Afghanistan in July 2015 on the basis of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan (S/2015/336).

29. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite security challenges, the Government consistently demonstrated its commitment with regard to the implementation of the action plan signed with the United Nations in 2012 to end the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence against children. Efforts included funding and chairing joint coordination mechanisms and ensuring their decentralization to conflict-affected provinces. The President also nominated a personal adviser on sexual violence and child recruitment. Moreover, a newly promulgated amnesty law excluded the crimes of recruitment of children and sexual violence from amnesty. Progress is also being made on the fight against impunity, with the arrest, prosecution and sentencing of high ranking perpetrators of grave violations against children.

30. In Myanmar, the implementation of the action plan has resulted in the release of hundreds of child recruits from the armed forces of Myanmar (Tatmadaw). The collaboration between the United Nations and the Government includes regular reviews, training sessions and increased monitoring access to Tatmadaw facilities. Despite the progress, children continue to be found in the Tatmadaw's ranks and are sometimes deployed to the front line.

31. As outlined in the previous report to the General Assembly (A/69/212), the delisting of the Armée nationale tchadienne was another important milestone for the campaign. The protection of children requires ongoing efforts, however, particularly in the light of the role of Chad in the Multinational Joint Task Force. For instance, the Government of Chad, the United Nations and non-governmental organization partners are still working to address long-term needs regarding the establishment of a universal birth registration system, the adoption of a child protection law and measures to institutionalize age verification processes.

32. Despite the progress in the campaign highlighted above, in Yemen and South Sudan the intensification of conflict reversed previous gains and presented serious challenges for future engagement.

33. It is important to highlight that the achievements of the campaign to end the recruitment of children in government forces will also help in addressing recruitment and use by non-State armed groups. Of the 49 non-State armed groups in the annexes to the most recent annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/69/926-S/2015/409), 32 are present in the seven remaining campaign countries. As noted above, the aim of the campaign is to assist the Member States concerned in developing their legal frameworks, including the criminalization of the recruitment of children, and to provide their national institutions with tools and mechanisms to build capacity, which can be used to address and respond to violations by non-State armed groups.

# IV. Addressing grave violations by non-State armed groups

34. The Special Representative has consistently sought to engage with all parties to conflict, including non-State armed groups, which continue to constitute the majority of parties (49 of the 57 parties) listed in the most recent annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for grave violations against children. It is critical that any efforts to advance the children and armed conflict agenda seek to engage with this diverse group of actors. To that end, a multifaceted approach is necessary, taking into consideration the different operational environments.

35. The majority of extremist groups have no interest in engaging with national and international actors, which limits the possibilities to address violations and protect children. The identification of entry points to apply political and financial pressure through the international community, including Member States, is therefore a vital first step. International instruments such as sanctions are another avenue for addressing violations committed against children by extremist groups.

36. In that context, it is crucial to interact with non-State armed groups that are willing to engage on the issue of child protection and to convince them to fulfil their obligations under international law. The Special Representative requests that the Governments concerned facilitate cooperation between the United Nations and those non-State armed groups, in accordance with the principle outlined in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) that it does not prejudge their legal status.

37. In many instances, engagement with non-State armed groups has led to commitments and actions by those groups to end violations, in particular child recruitment within their ranks, and some have signed action plans with the United Nations. In the reporting period, progress was achieved with the Cobra faction of the South Sudan Democratic Army, which released more than 1,700 children. That followed a meeting between the Special Representative and the leader of the Cobra Faction, David Yau Yau, during the Special Representative's visit to South Sudan in June 2014, and further efforts in the field by UNICEF. More recently, in May 2015, the Special Representative participated in consultations in Austria on children and armed conflict with representatives of the Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid and the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi, which are listed in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for the recruitment and use of children in the Sudan. Thanks to joint efforts with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, the leaders of the three groups signed a joint statement on the situation of children in Darfur, in which they accepted responsibility for the protection of children and pledged to end and prevent grave violations against them. During her visit to Myanmar in July 2015, the Special Representative entered into dialogue with the Kachin Independence Army, the Karen National Liberation Army and the Karenni Army, which are listed for engaging in the recruitment and use of children. She had productive discussions with the groups with regard to action plans to end and prevent child recruitment and use and other grave violations.

### Entry points in mediation and peace processes with non-State armed groups

38. Political dialogue, and peace and ceasefire negotiations represent unique opportunities to reach out to parties to conflict, particularly non-State armed groups,

and to advocate for the protection of children. Children, who often form such a large proportion of populations in conflict situations, bear the brunt of conflict; the early consideration of their protection needs in discussions and negotiations is therefore important.

39. Engagement with parties to conflict on issues such as the separation, release and handover of children can provide a starting point in discussions and offer a unique common denominator for parties in otherwise difficult or protracted negotiations. Moreover, the inclusion of child protection provisions in ceasefire and peace agreements helps in anticipating and planning resource requirements for the reintegration of children.

40. In a positive development, many Member States acknowledged those aspects during an open debate of the Security Council on the theme of protecting children from non-State armed groups, hosted by France in March 2015. Recommendations made during the debate were for a more systematic inclusion of child protection provisions in all peace and ceasefire agreements, including those relating to the unconditional release and reintegration of children. The recommendations were collected in a non-paper shared by France with the Secretary-General in June 2015 (A/69/918-S/2015/372, annex). Some Member States also requested that a guidance note for mediators and special envoys be developed, which the Office of the Special Representative stands ready to support.

41. In that spirit, during the reporting period the Special Representative communicated with the international mediators of the inter-Malian dialogue hosted by Algeria. She advocated for the integration of key child protection provisions in the final peace agreement, particularly as part of the security arrangements and on aspects relating to justice, reconciliation and accountability. In particular, she highlighted critical aspects of child protection for the separation, release and reintegration of children associated with the Malian armed groups involved in the dialogue and called for stronger wording in the accountability section. Although the final wording still lacked critical aspects on child protection, awareness was raised and advocacy efforts continued. Engagement in the peace process complemented efforts of United Nations child protection actors on the ground to engage with some non-State armed groups, resulting in the signing of a local command order to stop and prevent all grave violations by the joint troops of the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad and the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad in September 2014.

42. On 5 and 6 May 2015, upon the invitation of the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo, the Special Representative travelled to Havana to engage with parties to the Colombian peace process. The peace talks, which were facilitated by Cuba and Norway, were launched in August 2012 with the aim of ending nearly five decades of conflict. Following sustained advocacy by the Special Representative, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, the negotiating parties have committed to address children's issues as a confidence-building measure. Discussions are under way to take further steps to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, as well as to release and reintegrate children currently associated with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo. In that regard, the Special Representative welcomes the announcement in June 2015 of the release of children under 15 years of age by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de

Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo and looks forward to the swift implementation of their release and to further progress to ensure the separation of all children.

43. In the Central African Republic, the Brazzaville Agreement of July 2014 offered another example of how the implementation of a cessation of hostilities agreement can open space to engage parties to conflict on child protection issues. Following the Agreement, United Nations leadership and child protection actors intensified their engagement with non-State armed groups, which resulted in the adoption of command orders to prohibit the recruitment and use of children by two ex-Séléka factions, namely, the Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de Centafrique and the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique. As the political process was going on, the United Nations used an opening in the lead-up to the Bangui Forum for the signature of a commitment by 11 armed groups and factions from ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka on 5 May 2014 to stop and prevent the recruitment and use of children, as well as other grave violations against children. As at July 2015, a number of the armed groups are in the process of discussing action plans with the United Nations, and several hundred children have been released.

44. An action plan agreed between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the United Nations on the issue of the recruitment and use of child soldiers was signed in 2009 and renewed in 2013. Progress on the implementation of the action plan has been steady, with the Government of the Philippines facilitating access for the United Nations. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front increased its engagement and conducted repeated information sessions on ending child recruitment with members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces. In parallel, planning for a communications campaign, as identified in the action plan, continued with the aim of sensitizing the community on the involvement of children in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front also convened in April 2015 to discuss its role in preventing the recruitment and use of children by armed groups in communities. The United Nations continued to support and assist the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, utilizing political momentum as the peace negotiations continued. The Government has also improved the legal framework regarding grave violations against children, which will apply to all parties to conflict in the Philippines.

# V. Raising global awareness and mainstreaming

## A. Field visits

45. Field visits remain a central aspect of the Special Representative's activities because they provide an important opportunity to engage directly with parties to conflict, government officials, the diplomatic community and civil society to pursue advocacy and mandate implementation. Field visits were complemented by other engagements outlined in the present report, which were undertaken in various countries to engage with parties to conflict or foster international cooperation to ensure respect for children's rights. During the reporting period, the Special Representative undertook field visits to Somalia (August 2014), Nigeria (January 2015) and Myanmar (July 2015).

**Somalia**

46. The Special Representative travelled to Mogadishu and Kismaayo from 16 to 20 August 2014, where she interacted with senior officials from the Federal Government of Somalia, the Interim Jubba Administration, the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations. She stopped in Nairobi on 21 August to meet with Nairobi-based stakeholders, including the country task force on the monitoring and reporting mechanism. The objectives of her visit were to assess at first hand the impact of conflict on children and to follow up earlier discussions with Somali officials relating to the implementation of the two action plans on killing and maiming and on recruitment and use, both signed in 2012. She appreciated the commitment and efforts of the Federal Government of Somalia to protect children and the progress in the implementation of the action plans. She took the opportunity to call upon her interlocutors to take all measures necessary to minimize the impact of conflict and military operations on children, including responding to the threat posed by armed groups in line with international humanitarian and human rights law. She also advocated for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, particularly the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. She also engaged with the African Union Mission in Somalia leadership to enhance the protection of children in the context of military operations. In Mogadishu, the Special Representative visited the Serendi Rehabilitation Centre for disengaged combatants including children, particularly from Al-Shabaab. The Special Representative raised concerns regarding the lack of a clear and transparent legal framework concerning those held in the Centre and other similar centres in Somalia, particularly regarding the right to challenge the lawfulness of the deprivation of liberty. The Special Representative highlighted that children should only be deprived of their liberty as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time. She called on the Federal Government of Somalia to ensure that children in the rehabilitation centres are handed over to child protection actors as soon as possible.

**Nigeria**

47. Following the inclusion of Nigeria as a new situation of concern on the children and armed conflict agenda, with the listing in 2014 of Boko Haram/JAS for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals, the Special Representative visited the country from 11 to 17 January 2015 to evaluate the impact of conflict in the north-east on children, support the roll-out of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and engage with the Nigerian authorities. The Special Representative also travelled to Yola, where she met with State authorities and internally displaced persons who had fled from attacks by Boko Haram/JAS.

48. The Government agreed to formalize collaboration with the United Nations on children and armed conflict through an interministerial committee in Abuja and decentralized committees in three conflict-affected states, and through the appointment of focal points at the federal and state levels. In her meetings with government and military officials, the Special Representative raised concerns relating to allegations of grave violations committed by the Nigerian defence and security forces, the "civilian joint task force" and other vigilante groups in the course of their operations against Boko Haram/JAS. Her interlocutors committed to investigate the allegations. Following a commitment made during her meeting with the Minister of Justice, a legal advisory was issued by the Government in January

2015, which reiterated the prohibition of the recruitment and use of children, including by the "civilian joint task force" and vigilante groups. Since her visit to Nigeria, the Special Representative has continued engagement and advocacy on her concerns regarding the protection of children, particularly in the context of operations against Boko Haram/JAS by individual neighbouring countries and by the Multinational Joint Task Force.

#### Myanmar

49. From 12 to 17 July 2015, the Special Representative undertook a visit to Myanmar focusing on the implementation of the joint action plan signed in 2012 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the armed forces of Myanmar (Tatmadaw). She travelled to Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay and Myitkyina (Kachin State) and met with senior officials from the Government, the Tatmadaw and civil society. She had constructive dialogue on the remaining challenges to close the gaps and prevent child recruitment and use by the Tatmadaw. The Special Representative welcomed the release of 646 former child soldiers since the signature of the joint action plan, but stressed the need for proactive measures to prevent continuing underage recruitment. In particular, she called for the robust application of age assessment within the centralized military recruitment process, and for accountability through the criminalization of the recruitment and use of children by both military and civilian perpetrators. Another concern raised with the Government was the detention of child soldiers for alleged desertion from the Tatmadaw.

50. The Special Representative met with former child soldiers released by the Tatmadaw, who shared their experiences of the long-term physical and psychological impacts of underage recruitment and use. With the Government, she highlighted the need to address the root causes of child recruitment, including through increasing access to education and employment opportunities.

51. In her dialogue with both Government interlocutors and non-State armed groups, the Special Representative noted that, in the context of the ongoing peace process, addressing common concerns relating to the protection of children could be an entry point for building trust and de-escalating tensions between the parties. She also reminded the parties that immediate steps could be taken to release children from their ranks and end underage recruitment, even without a nationwide ceasefire agreement, which was under negotiation at the time of the visit.

## B. Working with regional organizations

#### African Union

52. The Special Representative continued her engagement with the African Union throughout the reporting period. Her Office supported the development of the African Union workplan, which was approved in February 2015 to operationalize the declaration of intent signed in 2013. The workplan identifies core priorities to incorporate the issue of children and armed conflict into the work, policies, and decision-making of the African Union, with particular attention on capacity and knowledge management, support to State ratifications and compliance with African treaty bodies, and mainstreaming in the planning of African Union peace support operations. In addition, the Special Representative was invited to a high-level

retreat of the African Union in the United Republic of Tanzania in October 2014, which provided an opportunity to discuss the children and armed conflict agenda with senior African Union officials, with a specific focus on mediation.

**European Union**

53. The European Union remains an important partner, particularly in integrating the protection of children in conflict in the political and human rights dialogue. On 12 February 2015, the Special Representative and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, renewed their commitment to work together in a joint statement on ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The Special Representative addressed the European Parliament on 3 December 2014, focusing on how better to protect children in armed conflict. In June 2015, her Office participated in training for the European External Action Service and diplomatic mission staff in Brussels on children and armed conflict, together with UNICEF.

**League of Arab States**

54. Building upon previous engagement with the League of Arab States, the Special Representative entered into a cooperation agreement with the League on 22 September 2014, marked by a signing ceremony with the Secretary-General of the League, Nabil El-Arabi, and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. The aim of the agreement is to further strengthen the collaboration between the two entities, with a focus on ensuring the protection of children living in conflict-affected areas in the Arab world. In particular, the agreement seeks to enhance the capacity of the League to address issues pertaining to children and armed conflict across its areas of operation. The Office of the Special Representative and the Permanent Observer Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations developed a workplan in which immediate and long-term activities and joint engagement are outlined. The workplan articulates practical steps required to strengthen the internal capacity of the League, with the overall objective of adopting a strategy on the protection of children affected by armed conflict. The efforts are in line with General Assembly resolution 69/9 of 11 November 2014 on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

**North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

55. The Special Representative continued to strengthen the partnership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to support the ongoing institutionalization of child protection. With that aim, her Office participated in a workshop in April 2015 that focused on using practical field experience to create training on the issue of children and armed conflict for current and future NATO deployments. The inclusion of a children and armed conflict advisor in the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan is also a welcome step that will improve the capacity of NATO troops and national authorities regarding children and armed conflict issues. In the Wales Summit Declaration of 5 September 2014, NATO reaffirmed its commitment to implement Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and further integrate the issue of children and armed conflict into the planning and conduct of its operations and missions and into its training, monitoring and reporting.

## C. Building support on partnerships with United Nations mechanisms

56. In November 2014, the Special Representative addressed the General Assembly and other child protection stakeholders during the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, the Special Representative, jointly with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, worked to support the adoption by the Assembly of its resolution 69/293, in which it established 19 June as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

57. During the reporting period three open debates of the Security Council on children and armed conflict took place, which resulted in the adopted of Council resolution 2225 (2015) and a non-paper issued by France on proposals for action to protect children from non-State armed groups (A/69/9180S/2015/372, annex). The Special Representative also briefed the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on specific country situations to ensure that members of the Council were kept abreast of latest developments pertaining to her mandate. During the 12-month period, country reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict were issued for Afghanistan (S/2015/336) and South Sudan (S/2014/884).

58. The Special Representative led the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/69/926-S/2015/409). During the reporting period, two reports were discussed in open debates of the Security Council, one in September 2014 covering the year 2013, and one in June 2015, covering the year 2014. The information in the latest report demonstrated a significant increase in incidents of abduction in 2014, with approximately 2,500 incidents perpetrated mostly by non-State armed groups, a significant increase from the approximately 550 abductions documented in the 2013 annual report (A/68/878-S/2014/339). The Special Representative worked with Member States, non-governmental organizations and members of the Council to highlight concerns about the increasing occurrence of abductions. That resulted in the unanimous adoption by the Council of its resolution 2225 (2015), co-sponsored by Malaysia and 55 other Member States, in which it expressed grave concern over the abduction of children in situations of armed conflict. The Council requested the Secretary-General to include in the annexes to his future reports on children and armed conflict those parties to armed conflict that engaged, in contravention of applicable international law, in patterns of abduction of children in situations of armed conflict.

59. The Special Representative also advocated for the inclusion of grave violations against children as designation criteria for sanctions, and engaged with Security Council sanctions committees in a number of country situations. She briefed the committees concerning the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in September 2014 and South Sudan in May 2015, providing information on grave violations committed against children in those situations.

60. The Special Representative was in regular communication with the Human Rights Council and various human rights mechanisms as key forums to help to raise awareness on and address violations of the rights of children in situations of conflict. In September 2014, at the invitation of the President of the Human Rights Council, the Special Representative briefed the Council on the situation of children

and armed conflict in Iraq during a special session. At the twenty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council, in March 2015, the Special Representative presented her annual report to the Council (A/HRC/28/54), in which she noted developments on accountability for grave violations against children and set out a series of recommendations to further the protection of children's rights. The Office of the Special Representative was actively involved in the implementation of the action plan and in the several work streams of the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative.

61. The Special Representative also met with the Chair and members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to enhance information-sharing and encourage joint advocacy on children affected by armed conflict. The Special Representative continued to advocate ratification by Member States of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In 2014, an additional seven States ratified the Optional Protocol, namely, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Saint Lucia and the State of Palestine. To date, the Optional Protocol has 129 signatories and 159 State parties. In December 2014, the Federal Parliament of Somalia adopted a law ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The law was signed by the President of Somalia on 20 January 2015. South Sudan also finalized the ratification of the Convention on 6 May 2015.

# VI. Recommendations

62. The Special Representative calls upon Member States to protect children caught up in conflict in line with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, particularly in the context of counteracting terrorism and extremist groups.

63. Noting the progress made in the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, the Special Representative calls upon the countries concerned to galvanize their efforts to finalize the implementation of their action plans. She also notes with concern the deteriorating situation in a number of countries involved in the campaign, and calls upon their leaders to uphold earlier commitments to end the recruitment and use of children.

64. The Special Representative calls upon Member States to continue to facilitate United Nations access to and dialogue with non-State armed groups with a view to ending and preventing grave violations of children's rights. Particular attention should be given to the inclusion of child protection concerns in ceasefire and peace negotiations with non-State armed groups.

65. The Special Representative calls upon Member States to consider alternatives to the deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged or actual association with armed groups or as part of counter-terrorism measures. She calls upon Member States to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims and to ensure that the deprivation of liberty, for any purpose whatsoever, should be a last resort and for the shortest time possible.

66. Recalling that the issue of the reintegration of children is crucial to ensure the long-term sustainability of peace and security, the Special Representative encourages the Member States concerned to take appropriate measures to reintegrate those children, giving special attention to the needs of girls. She also calls on all Member

States to provide the necessary political, technical and financial support to reintegration programmes.

67. Noting that 2015 is the year that the sustainable development goals will be adopted, and noting with concern the increasing number of attacks on schools and hospitals, the Special Representative calls upon Member States to ensure that the rights to education and health are a cornerstone of efforts to protect children from conflict, and upon the General Assembly to continue to give due consideration to the issue in its resolutions on humanitarian and development issues.

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**Seventieth session**
Item 98 (d) of the provisional agenda*
**General and complete disarmament**

# Relationship between disarmament and development

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/56. It discusses recent trends in the further strengthening within the United Nations of the relationship between disarmament and development. In addition, the report contains information received from Governments on the subject.

* A/70/150.

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# I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 69/56, on the relationship between disarmament and development, the Assembly stressed the central role of the United Nations in the relationship between disarmament and development, and requested the Secretary-General to strengthen further the role of the Organization in this field. In paragraph 2 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to take action, through appropriate organs and within available resources, for the implementation of the action programme adopted in 1987 at the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.[1]

2. In paragraph 6 of the resolution, the General Assembly reiterated its invitation to Member States to provide the Secretary-General with information regarding measures and efforts to devote part of the resources made available by the implementation of disarmament and arms limitation agreements to economic and social development. In paragraph 7 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventieth session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

3. On 25 February 2015, the Secretariat sent a note verbale to Member States seeking their views. At the time of writing, replies had been received from Argentina, Armenia, Cuba, El Salvador, Jamaica, Portugal, Spain and Ukraine. This information is contained in section III below.

# II. Strengthening further the role of the United Nations in the disarmament-development relationship

4. The United Nations continues to take action to implement the recommendations contained in key documents in the area of disarmament and development, including the action programme adopted in 1987 at the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, and the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the relationship between disarmament and development (see A/59/119).

5. In the past decade, the United Nations has increasingly broadened the scope of disarmament and arms regulation efforts to address the social and economic impact of the use of conventional weapons, their proliferation and accumulation, and the illicit trade particularly in small arms. Examples include the work undertaken by the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations system partners addressing the impact of explosive weapons in populated areas, the capacity-building programmes of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime including on implementation of the Firearms Protocol,[2] and the efforts of UNDP on crisis prevention and recovery.

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[1] See *Report of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, New York, 24 August-11 September 1987* (A/CONF.130/39).

[2] Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

6. The Arms Trade Treaty entered into force on 24 December 2014. The Treaty sets common standards to be observed by States parties in international transfers of conventional arms, ammunition and parts and components. It contains important provisions for international assistance and cooperation including the establishment of a voluntary trust fund which will assist States parties in implementing the Treaty. The United Nations system has supported States parties' efforts to implement the Arms Trade Treaty, including through the work of the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, and through the management of the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

7. In his latest report to the Security Council on the issue of small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289), the Secretary-General underscored the human suffering caused by the misuse, diversion and illicit circulation of arms and ammunition. The report also highlighted government responsibility in regard to proper use of weapons and their safe storage, as well as in developing sound legislation and putting in place adequate procedures to enable the tracing of illicit weapons. Importantly, it examined measures for addressing the illicit circulation of arms and ammunition including through monitoring of arms embargoes, peacekeeping efforts, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, and the strengthening of the rule of law. In his report, the Secretary-General also urged that specific attention be paid to curbing the illicit flows of ammunition.

8. In their efforts to stem the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Member States continue to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. At the second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts, held in New York from 1 to 5 June 2015, States considered that recent developments in small arms and light weapon technologies have the potential to both positively and negatively impact the illicit trade in small arms. While radio-frequency identification and blue-tooth technologies can enhance the security of weapon stockpiles and potentially reduce diversion, the 3D printing of weapons has the potential to increase unlicensed craft weapon production. The issue of transfer of such technologies as part of international cooperation and assistance was a central component of the discussions at the Meeting. Assistance, capacity-building and international cooperation are expected to continue to feature on the agenda of meetings under the Programme of Action, including the Biennial Meeting of States in 2016 and the Third Review Conference in 2018.

9. Armed violence claims the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians each year, including many women and children. Armed violence has severely hindered efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. The new framework that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals should strive to explicitly include the prevention and reduction of armed violence and combating illicit arms flows, as these have been shown to have a negative impact on prospects for social and economic development The Office for Disarmament Affairs will continue to support efforts to reduce armed violence, including through its regional centres and the promotion of, and the provision of technical assistance for, the establishment of gun-free zones.[3]

[3] www.un.org/disarmament/publications/more/gfz-guidelines/gfz-guidelines.pdf.

10. The United Nations Report on Military Expenditures, a global transparency mechanism on military expenditures, continues to be of value as it can provide a sound basis for discussions on levels of military spending, underscoring the key principle of the Charter of the United Nations of the "least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources". Since 1981, Member States voluntarily submit an annual report on their military expenditures using an agreed format. This standardized reporting allows for comparison of expenditures across States or years, and offers insights into the details of and trends in national military expenditures. The participation in the instrument remains relatively low, with on average approximately 60 States participating annually in recent years, compared to a period between 2002 and 2008 when on average approximately 80 States reported annually. In 2014 and 2015, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to promote the instrument. This includes sending periodic reminders, and holding meetings and events to promote this reporting mechanism.

11. The United Nations continued to coordinate its activities related to disarmament and arms regulation through various interdepartmental mechanisms, which include in their activities components addressing the social and economic impacts of such weapons through victim assistance, reintegration and rehabilitation, and by promoting employment. These mechanisms include the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms, the United Nations Mine Action Team, and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.

# III. Information received from Governments

## Argentina

[Original: Spanish]
[15 May 2015]

The Argentine Republic has been undergoing a process of profound change in which special emphasis has been placed on the social dimension, but which is part of an overarching agenda of using the exercise of political power as a fundamental tool for implementing real change, with the active engagement of individuals and organizations.

The country now has a political, social and economic agenda that recognizes all Argentines as persons with full legal (human) rights and offers them the prospect of a life of inclusion and social justice; it is a national people's agenda for increasing production and reducing debt through an active, engaged and dynamic State.

The restoration and expansion of rights, the generation and protection of employment and the development of domestic production are the pillars of this process of change, in which economic policy is inseparable from social policy. Economic growth, together with policy measures for equitable redistribution, have enabled the Argentine State to make progress in strengthening rights for all while seeking to ensure equal opportunity through active policies of social protection and empowerment.

One example of this is the extension of rights through the universalization of the system for the protection of children, adolescents and pregnant women and the

system of pensions for older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as social security portability. Measures are also being taken to provide incentives for consumption in the domestic market as a means of boosting demand in order to generate employment; these are fundamental pillars of the Argentine development model.

Against this backdrop, the Argentine Republic's defence policy is based on a model that combines self-reliance with cooperation: it seeks to achieve sufficient self-defence capacity while at the same time engaging in bilateral and multilateral cooperation with a view to contributing to a regional and, where possible, global environment in which mutual trust and transparency set the stage for enhanced protection of national interests and a climate of freedom, peace and justice, thereby strengthening institutions and international law.

Argentina is a member of various regional integration arrangements, such as the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and is an active participant in various peacekeeping missions around the world, notably in Haiti, where its armed forces are involved in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. It is a peaceful country with one of the lowest arms expenditure rates in the region — and indeed the world — and a long history of advocating peace and respect for international law.

The Argentine example is therefore not relevant for the purpose of analysing the relationship between reductions or levels of arms expenditure and increases in social investment, particularly over the past decade.

For example, while the Argentine Government allocated a mere 8.6 per cent of its 2015 national budget to defence and security services,[4] it allocated 58.6 per cent to social services.[5]

## Armenia

[Original: English]
[13 April 2015]

The persistence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the threat of resumption of large-scale hostilities by Azerbaijan do not give the Republic of Armenia much latitude to embark on disarmament activities. Moreover, Azerbaijan is in stark violation of the legally binding Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and significantly exceeds the established maximum levels of holdings for the Treaty-Limited Equipment. The disproportionate accumulation of armaments and manifold increase of the military budget by Azerbaijan in recent years inevitably drives the arms race at the regional level. This prevents Armenia for the time being from engaging in earnest in disarmament.

Nevertheless, even in this complex security situation, Armenia manages to carry out disarmament activities and allocates resources generated therefrom to humanitarian, economic and social development purposes.

[4] Defence and security services include national defence, internal security, prison services and intelligence services.

[5] Social services include drinking water and sewer systems, education and culture, housing and urban development, science and technology, and social advocacy and assistance.

The first disarmament activity was carried out in 2007, when the rocket fuel Melange stockpiled in the vicinity of the Armenian town of Spitak was transformed into fertilizer. The project was implemented in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and a number of donor countries contributed. The recycling plant created several dozens of jobs, though temporary, in the local economy, and the fertilizers produced were distributed among farmers for a symbolic price.

On Armenia's initiative a trust fund project with NATO will be established. The assessment and project proposal stage has already been completed but implementation is pending, due to the lack of financing. One of the components of the fund is demining. Assistance will be offered to the Armenian side for demining capacity-building. The project will significantly broaden the mine clearance activities in Armenia that are already under way. As a result, large swaths of countryside will return to agricultural cultivation and improve the economic outlook in border regions of the country.

The Republic of Armenia remains a staunch supporter of disarmament and stands ready to properly engage once the security environment allows.

## Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[26 May 2015]

Global military expenditure reached the staggering figure of $1.75 trillion, or 2.4 per cent of global gross domestic product, in 2013, while 805 million people experienced chronic hunger between 2012 and 2014.

The exorbitant amounts currently spent on weapons should be used instead to promote peace, economic and social development and a life of dignity for all human beings. The resources currently dedicated to armaments could be used, for example, to help countries reach the ostensibly unattainable Millennium Development Goals.

The very survival of humanity is continually threatened by the existence of more than 16,000 nuclear weapons.

For the cost of a single nuclear weapon, medical care could be provided to 36,000 people. Cuba reiterates its support for the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. The resources now being used to build up nuclear arsenals should be used instead for the benefit of humanity and the eradication of poverty.

The first International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons was celebrated on 26 September 2014.

Cuba welcomes the broad international support for that initiative. In the words of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz: "In a nuclear war, the collateral damage would be the life of humanity ... Every Government in the world has the obligation to respect the right to life of every nation ... Peoples must demand their right to live from their political leaders ... Nobody can afford to be indifferent or to lose a moment in demanding respect for that right. Tomorrow it will be too late."

Resources released through disarmament measures should be devoted to development, particularly in the least developed countries, as established in the Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by the General Assembly in 1986.

Cuba reiterates its proposal that half of current military expenditure be allocated to an international United Nations-managed fund established for that purpose. Such a fund should be in a position to ensure sustainable socioeconomic development and help countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The United Nations should play a central role in highlighting the interrelationship between disarmament and development, primarily in the implementation of the action programme adopted at the 1987 International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.

The action programme envisages the adoption of measures to reduce the level and magnitude of military expenditures and reallocate those resources for social and economic development in the developing countries, and to review issues related to the conversion of military industry to civilian production.

The Government and people of Cuba are firmly committed to the implementation of the action programme. The country's Revolutionary Armed Forces have placed their military resources and capabilities at the service of Cuba's economic and social development whenever necessary, including military units and camps, military transportation and aircraft, engineering resources, medical services and other logistical resources. Relevant examples include the relocation of the "Granma" Naval Academy so that its former premises could accommodate the Latin American School of Medicine, which is now being used to provide free training for young people from over 100 countries, most of whom are from low-income families, to become doctors; the provision of military personnel and fumigation equipment for the campaign to eradicate disease vectors; the support provided for food production; and the services offered by military construction companies for the building of schools, canals, reservoirs, roads and natural disaster evacuation routes.

A naval base is located on a part of Cuban territory that is illegally occupied by the United States of America. The Guantánamo military base must be closed immediately and the territory returned to its rightful owner, the Cuban people, so that it may be used for the implementation of economic and social development projects.

Cuba reiterates that the international community should take practical steps to ensure that the resources now being used for military purposes are reallocated to development activities.

## El Salvador

[Original: Spanish]
[12 May 2015]

With regard to the obligations which El Salvador has undertaken through the United Nations and the Organization of American States in relation to measures to support economic and social development through disarmament and arms limitation efforts, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/56 on the relationship between disarmament and development, the Salvadoran Government's five-year

plan allocates a large portion of the national budget to productive employment, education, health and security. As there has been no direct increase in the defence budget of the Salvadoran armed forces in recent years, their acquisition of weapons is limited.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence, in coordination with other ministries, has organized campaigns to provide goods in exchange for weapons, with the objective of maintaining stability and encouraging sustainable economic and social development.

## Jamaica

[Original: English]
[5 May 2015]

The Government of Jamaica has implemented a Small Arms Control Policy, which seeks to institute proper stockpile management practices/policies in an effort to reduce the number of illegal firearms in Jamaica. As part of the overarching Small Arms Control Strategy, Jamaica has been involved in the following activities, which are in keeping with the United Nations broad definition of practical disarmament measures:

(a) Destruction of firearms and ammunition in order to prevent diversion of the same into the illicit arms trade, which could exacerbate the current homicide rate. As a result, as at 31 March 2015, the Government of Jamaica has destroyed 840 obsolete/unserviceable/recovered firearms and 64,172 rounds of expired ammunition that were in the custody of the security forces. This project is ongoing.

(b) Implementation of a national marking project seeking to bring Jamaica into compliance with international obligations, as well as to improve the traceability of small arms passing through Jamaica's borders for use by the security forces (State-owned) and private citizens. As a result, as at 31 March 2015, 1,684 State-owned firearms and 478 privately-owned firearms have been marked. This project will continue until all State-owned and privately-owned firearms are marked.

(c) Amendments to the Firearms Act in order for Jamaica to honour its international obligations, as well as to address existing deficiencies within the current legislation that hinder the Firearm Licensing Authority and members of the security forces in the execution of their duties, that is, the enforcement of the Firearms Act. The primary intention of amending the Act is to assist in the reduction of violent crimes, the dismantling of organized criminal networks and the restoration of peace and public order by reducing the availability of illegal firearms in Jamaica. The amendments being contemplated will also consider the introduction of new services and categories of permits, certificates and licences, as well as different categories of firearm experts/practitioners such as trainers, range operators and the like, which require the introduction of new fees.

(d) Jamaica signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty in June 2013 and June 2014 respectively. Ratification of the Treaty signals Jamaica's contribution to the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons. This activity will also serve to mitigate potential security threats which may result from diversion of such items being transited/trans-shipped through Jamaican territory.

(e) Commencement of a specialized firearm awareness training programme for law enforcement officials operating at Jamaica's ports of entry, in order to sensitize such officers to the different component parts of the firearms reportedly being smuggled into Jamaica. Several of these component parts can be used to modify the physical characteristics, functionality and ballistic identity of the firearm, which can be present a significant challenge to law enforcement.

## Portugal

[Original: English]
[4 May 2015]

**International instruments**

Portugal is a party to all relevant disarmament conventions, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which establish the obligation of States parties to destroy their existing stockpile of landmines and cluster munitions, but also to conduct clearance activities in mined areas under their jurisdiction. In fact, the aforementioned weapons gravely hinder the economic and social development of affected communities by preventing access to farmland and pastures, as well as other vital resources. The humanitarian consequences of these kinds of weapons must be pointed out and should be regarded as an essential element in the universalization efforts of both instruments.

We are also a party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. We follow with concern the development of lethal autonomous weapons and recall the discussions already taking place in the Human Rights Council regarding armed drones.

As one of the coordinators for the universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Portugal fully engaged, in 2012 and 2013, with all United Nations Member States in order to promote this landmark convention, which is still the sole multilateral instrument that aims at putting an end to the civilian suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions. We have outreached intensely in promoting the Convention.

Portugal regrets that the international community has so far been unable to reach consensus on a protocol regarding mines other than antipersonnel landmines in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Mines other than antipersonnel landmines, by blocking roads and general access to and from certain areas, prevent effective humanitarian action on the ground. Furthermore, such mines may lead to the isolation of the population, hampering the development of State infrastructures in the affected region and thus undermining State authority and hindering development.

Recently, on a multinational level, Portugal participated in the Open Working Group for the negotiation of the development objectives in the post-2015 development agenda, struggling for the inclusion of a specific objective on matters of peace and security. In this context Portugal has seen with great satisfaction the inclusion of Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable

development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

**Assistance**

In 2012, Portugal continued its cooperation with Mozambique regarding landmine clearance and disposal, namely by granting access to maps and relevant cartography, of which copies were made available to the authorities of Mozambique.

In this context, a delegation from the Mozambique National Demining Institute visited the Archives of the Portuguese Ministry of National Defence, as well as the Tropical Research Institute, a public research and development institution which holds a vast cartographic archive (Overseas Historical Archive).

In June 2014, Portugal participated in the Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention that was held in Maputo, and had the honour to be a Friend of the Presidency. In this quality, Portugal was requested to make some contribution and has sent some materials in the area of logistic support (informatics).

Furthermore, in the past, Portugal has also provided technical assistance in the field of mine detection and clearance, in the framework of IFOR (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and KFOR (Kosovo) and training in demining activities in Guinea-Bissau.

Portugal is also involved in the mine action project in Libya with its five plus five defence initiative partners.

Portugal can provide assistance upon request, depending on the availability of adequate funding. The Portuguese armed forces experts are qualified in mine detection and clearance. The equipment used in mine detection and clearance includes electronic search means, improvised explosive device/explosive ordnance disposal operator suits and X-ray (real time), dearmer devices, mechanical devices, hand-held metal detectors and multi-sensor systems.

Portugal signed a country programme framework with the International Atomic Energy Agency in which cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries is included as a development cooperation measure regarding non-proliferation and disarmament.

In different occasions, Portugal has raised in bilateral contacts the issue of disarmament as an element that should be taken into account in development strategies.

**National implementation**

Portugal adopted, in 2009, the National Strategy for Security and Development. This Strategy focuses on coherence and efficiency, and ensures better coordination of all Portuguese programmes. The Strategy also promotes a broader approach and reinforces the priority of human security as a major goal in the Portuguese cooperation policy.

## Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[30 April 2015]

Spain has reaffirmed its commitment to disarmament and development by adopting legislative and operational measures and promoting active disarmament and development policies in other parts of the world.

Spain has one of the world's most advanced pieces of legislation in the field of disarmament, which exceeds the requirements set out in the international treaties and commitments by which Spain is bound. It is also making a considerable effort to contain its military expenditures, which represent about 0.53 per cent of gross domestic product in the current year.

At the international level, Spain is contributing to the effort to address development issues in relation to the adoption of disarmament measures by supporting the adoption of United Nations resolutions urging all States to adopt such measures.

The election of Spain as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and of the Committees established pursuant to resolutions 1718 (2006) and 1737 (2006) reflects its image as a trustworthy and responsible country with human resources capable of taking on those responsibilities.

Spain complies strictly with the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It has retained 1,660 anti-personnel mines, 306 mortar rounds and 9 aerial bombs for purposes of experimentation in demining materials and techniques.

The International Demining Centre has held 46 courses on humanitarian demining, which were attended by more than 1,000 demining personnel and instructors from 18 countries.

In 2014 the Centre delivered a course on demining instruction for the Organization of American States (OAS), and in 2015 it held a demining course for 13 OAS experts.

Spain also hosts a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-accredited centre of excellence on countering improvised explosive devices. The Centre serves as a source of expertise in the context of NATO efforts to counter such devices.

Spanish regulations to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are more stringent than those envisaged in the United Nations Programme of Action on this issue.

Lastly, Spain devotes significant military resources, both human and technical, to the conduct of disarmament, peacekeeping and assistance missions throughout the world.

## Ukraine

[Original: Russian]
[2 June 2015]

In order to make optimum use of available resources and further address the issue of poverty, and in accordance with the implementation plan for the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine, approved by an administrative order of the Government of Ukraine, a poverty elimination strategy identifying avenues and tools for reducing and preventing poverty will be developed in 2015.

The proposals developed will be based on the international obligations undertaken by Ukraine in the social sphere, international approaches to tackling poverty and social exclusion, best practices for developing and implementing strategic interventions to address the problems of poverty, and the results of the implementation of the State targeted social programme for overcoming poverty for the period up to 2015.

Under the 2014 State Budget Act, 50 per cent of the resources derived from the disposal during the current year of surplus weapons and military and specialized equipment belonging to the armed forces is allocated to the general fund of the State budget, while the other 50 per cent is allocated to the special fund of the Ministry of Defence to address social issues, in accordance with the comprehensive State programme to provide housing for members of the armed forces of Ukraine and their families.

In 2014, the special fund of the Ministry of Defence to finance the construction or purchase of housing for members of the armed forces received in excess of 27.5 million hryvnias (more than $1.2 million) through the disposal of surplus weapons and military and specialized equipment of the armed forces.

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**Seventieth session**
Item 98 (g) of the provisional agenda*
**General and complete disarmament**

# Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels

## Report of the Secretary-General

## Contents

| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Introduction | 2 |
| II. | Replies received from Member States | 2 |
| | Argentina | 2 |
| | Cuba | 2 |
| | Czech Republic | 3 |
| | El Salvador | 4 |
| | Germany | 4 |
| | Lebanon | 5 |
| | Russian Federation | 5 |
| | Spain | 6 |
| | Ukraine | 7 |

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 69/47, on conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, the General Assembly decided to give urgent consideration to the issues involved in conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the subject and to submit a report to the ! Assembly at its seventieth session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 18 February 2015, the Secretariat sent a note verbale to Member States requesting their views on the subject. To date, nine replies have been received from Member States and are reproduced in section II below. Subsequent replies will be issued as addenda to the present report.

# II. Replies received from Member States

## Argentina

[Original: Spanish]
[12 May 2015]

Argentina fully agrees with the proposal contained in paragraph 2 of the resolution, and understands the need for principles that serve as a framework for regional agreements, which will enhance mutual trust between countries in the region by helping to establish tighter controls over conventional arms.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that a mechanism for transparency in the military inventories of the countries of South America has been established through the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and that the information to be collected is already provided for in the forms used for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which Argentina has completed annually since the Register came into effect in 1991.

## Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[27 March 2015]

Conventional arms control efforts at the subregional, regional and global levels must strictly conform to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including equal rights, the self-determination of peoples, the right to self-defence, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Adequate arms control leads to security and the strengthening of peace. As part of the initiatives of the Latin American and Caribbean region to strengthen regional peace and security, the region was proclaimed a zone of peace at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana. In the proclamation, all Latin American and Caribbean States agreed to banish war and the threat and use of force in the region and to endeavour to resolve differences between States by peaceful means and in line with international law.

The conventional arms that Cuba possesses are defensive in nature and serve to ensure national security and defence. These arms are under the strict control of the appropriate State authorities. Moreover, Cuba has never possessed, does not possess and has no intention of ever possessing weapons of mass destruction of any kind.

In Cuba, the vast majority of conventional arms are the property of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. This Ministry has internal rules and mechanisms necessary for the rigorous and periodic control of stocks of these weapons and follows strict procedures to ensure the security of its arsenals.

In many regions, an obstacle to the control of conventional arms is the relative ease with which such arms can be acquired by non-State actors. It is a matter of concern that in many countries the sale of such arms is not strictly regulated and export and import permits are not rigorously controlled. No sales of any kind of arms are permitted in Cuba, either from or between individuals or between individuals and juridical persons.

Initiatives that promote international cooperation and assistance to control arms must be encouraged. Such activities must take into account national needs and requests and respect the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, efforts to promote regional and subregional agreements on conventional arms control must take into consideration the specific needs of the parties concerned and the voluntary nature of their involvement.

## Czech Republic

[Original: English]
[23 April 2015]

The Czech Republic in 2014 implemented all commitments stemming from international agreements on arms control, disarmament and confidence and security-building measures in Europe.

The Czech Republic, in accordance with to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe:

- Organized and conducted one multinational inspection abroad (with participation of four inspectors from four countries).
- Organized two multinational training inspections (with participation of nineteen inspectors from eight countries).
- Took part in two allied inspection teams abroad.

In accordance with the Vienna Document 2011, the Czech Republic:

- Organized one evaluation visit and two inspections of specified areas.
- Took part in eight visits to air bases, ten visits to other military facilities and in four demonstrations of new types of weapons.
- Took part in six inspections as a part of foreign teams.
- Took part in three additional inspections above quota.

The Czech Republic sent two assistants to two inspections conducted in accordance with article IV of the Daytona Peace Agreement.

In accordance with the Treaty on Open Skies, the Czech Republic:

- Received one observation flight and conducted two joint observation flights.
- Took part in one another observation flight as a part of a foreign team.

## El Salvador

[Original: Spanish]
[13 May 2015]

Pursuant to the obligations of El Salvador to the United Nations and to the Organization of American States concerning measures that its Armed Forces can take in accordance with resolution 69/47 entitled, "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", I hereby inform you that, in the context of the Conference of the Armed Forces of Central America and the Caribbean, an agreement has been ratified with a view to contributing to peace and security in the region. Under this agreement, the armed forces members of the Conference undertake to acquire only the arms necessary to face shared threats that are emerging in the region and that hinder national development. The Ministry of Defence also controls and registers firearms pursuant to the Act on the regulation and control of arms, ammunition, explosives and similar items.

## Germany

[Original: English]
[1 June 2015]

Germany is dedicated to confidence-building and conventional arms control measures at the regional level. Germany attaches great importance and devotes considerable commitment to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as its relevant regional security organization. Detailed information about Germany's commitment regarding regional security and confidence-building can be found in Germany's 2014 contribution to the database on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms dated 30 April 2015 (see General Assembly resolution 69/64), as well as Germany's report entitled "Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context", dated 29 May 2015 (see General Assembly resolution 69/46).

With regard to the request formulated in operative paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 69/47, currently Germany does not consider the Conference on Disarmament to be the appropriate forum for the formulation of principles regarding regional agreements on conventional arms control. We note that non-universal membership of the Conference on Disarmament may prevent specific regional contexts from being adequately taken into account when formulating such principles.

## Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[1 April 2015]

The Ministry of National Defence wishes to make the following points:

- In regard to this matter, the authoritative resolutions adopted by the United Nations should be duly complied with, and the Charter should be respected;
- Particular emphasis should be placed on the resolution of international disputes, in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict;
- States are equal in terms of sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is important to prevent an arms race and build confidence;
- All concerned regional States should remain compliant with a view to precluding any repetition of the double standards applied in connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. States should be held accountable in the event of non-compliance;
- The manufacture and transfer of arms should be controlled, and the smuggling of and illicit trafficking in arms should be suppressed in order to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of terrorists;
- Legislation should be enacted at the regional and international levels in order to limit the proliferation of such weapons, while allowing for the possibility of their individual or collective use to resist occupation or defend territory;
- Multilateralism should be strengthened as a means of furthering negotiation on arms regulation and disarmament.

## Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]
[21 April 2015]

Issues of conventional arms control in Europe remain relevant, especially considering the deterioration in the European security situation over the past year. However, General Assembly resolution 69/47, which contains language agreed upon in different geopolitical circumstances and repeated year after year, does not reflect current realities. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe lost its "relevance and value" and ceased to be a "cornerstone of European security" long ago, as it is hopelessly out of date. The Russian Federation suspended its participation in 2007.

The Russian Federation is prepared to discuss with our partners methods for developing a new regime for conventional arms control in Europe that takes into consideration current realities and addresses the concerns of Russia and those of other European States.

## Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[12 May 2015]

The ultimate goal of any system of arms control or confidence- and security-building measures is to prevent conflict by reducing the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation of the military activities of other countries; taking steps to impede covert military preparations; reducing the risk of surprise attacks; and reducing the risk of the outbreak of war by accident.

The establishment of confidence-building measures, especially among affected neighbouring States, the strengthening of border controls and the training of specialized staff, among other arrangements, could create a propitious environment for the elaboration of supranational (including regional and subregional) arms control agreements.

In addition, regional and subregional conventional arms control agreements should take into account the importance of:

- Increasing transparency measures within the regional and subregional forums themselves and disseminating the objectives of such forums.
- Compiling an arms inventory in the countries where such inventories do not yet exist.
- Measures to promote universal adherence to the various international instruments.
- Enforcing strict requirements for export and import permits.
- Strengthening mechanisms for monitoring weapons manufacturers.

In line with the above, Spain has defined its "thematic action lines" for its term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The most important of these action lines, as far as this report is concerned, are the following:

- Enhance the preventive role of the Council, in order to improve its responsiveness to emerging crises and potential threats to peace and security by addressing risk factors (such as the proliferation of conventional arms) and the root causes of conflict.
- Promote the role of regional and subregional organizations in the field of peace and security.
- Address disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes in fragile countries and post-conflict situations.
- In relation to the 1540 Committee, promote among States, industry and civil society, both the full and effective implementation of the resolution, with clear objectives in each of these three areas of action, and the reduction of the number of States that have yet to report on its implementation.

## Ukraine

[Original: English]
[26 May 2015]

Ukraine fully shares the vision and recognizes the importance of the role of conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and its constituent elements laid out in General Assembly resolution 69/47, and, accordingly, welcomes all respective measures in the field of conventional arms control past, present and future.

To Ukraine, which has become the victim of Russia's aggression, the answer to the question as to whether conventional arms control deserves continuous universal attention is quite obvious. Surely it does, and moreover, even more so in the light of the still not eradicated possibility of aggression.

Ukraine remains consistently committed to the objectives of strengthening security for all, including through effective conventional arms control. This commitment has been reinforced by Russia's uncivilized behaviour, which has, inter alia, maliciously caused conventional arms control in Europe to enter into a state of impasse. Thus, the result is an erosion of trust and confidence in the military field, a challenge to the very essence of the contemporary European security architecture, as well as to verifiable security and confidence-building embodied in conventional arms control and related confidence- and security-building measures.

Ukraine is a long-term responsible participant of such pan-European and complimentary bilateral confidence-building mechanisms relevant to conventional arms control as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Treaty on Open Skies, and the OSCE Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, as well as separate bilateral agreements on confidence- and security-building measures with neighbouring Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Belarus and Romania. As such, despite the tense situation in the country and the derivative increase of the burden on Ukraine's Armed Forces caused by Russia's aggression, Ukraine continues to comply with its obligations assumed under the above-referenced international instruments in the field of conventional arms control.

However, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which started with the annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and continues with the destabilization of the situation in the east of Ukraine, significantly complicated Ukraine's ability to ensure full and timely implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, once praised as a cornerstone of European security. Moreover, it has made it impossible to fulfil some of them for reasons of national security.

At the same time, the continuing possibility of aggression, while raising concerns over conventional arms control effectiveness, also underscores its potential value when countries comply with their commitments and obligations and implement them fully and in good faith. In particular, Ukraine's case is yet another reminder of the urgent need to improve conventional arms control in order to strengthen its capability, inter alia, via tightening intrusiveness and obligatory level to better address the existing security challenges in the areas of application.

Ukraine's case also compels a periodic assessment of the relevance, as well as the strengths and weaknesses, of conventional arms control tools used by participating States, without waiting for acts of aggression.

Sharing dissatisfaction with the ongoing impasse in conventional arms control in Europe, which occurred through the fault of the leadership of the Russian Federation, as well as with the slowdown in improvement in the confidence- and security-building measures of the Vienna Document 2011 during its chairmanship of OSCE in 2013, Ukraine initiated a discussion on the role that conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures can play in the creation of a modern and future security architecture in Europe.

The salient idea and the main goal of the Ukrainian initiative was and is to launch a future-oriented strategic discussion on conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures.

While the discussions have not yet provided a firm indication as to the concrete next steps, the Ukrainian initiative proved to be a timely undertaking. Future work towards this goal should be viewed in the context of related Russian aggressive actions.

Ukraine considers that confidence-building in the field of conventional arms:

- Offers, for a limited cost, a set of tools combining transparency through declaration, on-site verification and arms limitation, instead of devoting resources to gathering intelligence about the conventional capabilities of neighbouring countries.
- Is designated not only to control numbers of armaments and military equipment but also to reduce the risk of conflict by increasing trust among States us and contributing to greater openness, predictability and transparency in the field of defence planning and military activities.
- Must include such classic time-tested tools as complete, accurate and timely exchange of relevant information and its on-the-spot verification, with the highest possible level of specification and sufficient intrusiveness, respectively, dependent on the level of trust among their participants in each time span, bearing in mind that what the participating States do not notify within the framework of information exchange cannot be verified.
- Should incorporate from the outset, or gradually thereafter, all measures worked out for the instruments which as of today are exemplary in the areas of conventional arms control and confidence-building, namely, the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe and the OSCE Vienna Document 2011 and additional measures for the collective taming of aggression.
- Should first deal with the traditional categories of conventional armaments, bearing in mind the necessity to put new categories under control when the time comes.
- Should have as many participants as possible and accordingly cover as large an area as possible.
- Preferably be legally binding to be more obligatory. On the other hand, the overall experience with the OSCE Vienna Document 2011 has shown that a politically binding agreement can work.

- Should be periodically evaluated by parties for viability, effectiveness and the possibility of further enhancement by way of modernization.

The above-stated assumption is based on the following premises:

- The challenge for the international community is not just to identify the major threats and risks, but to define and adjust the role that appropriate arms control instruments can play in meeting them.
- The security of each participating State is inseparably linked to that of all others. Each participating State has an equal right to security.
- Participants should maintain only those military capabilities that are commensurate with their legitimate individual or collective security needs.
- There should be no spheres of influence and no such thing as a "veto" vote when it comes to aggression.
- Limitations and, where necessary reductions of forces, are an important element in the continuing search for security and stability at lower levels of forces. Other constraining provisions on armed forces and security-building measures must continue to be significant elements in the quest for stability.
- At all times it will be important to ensure complementarity between regionwide and subregional approaches. Regional arms control efforts should be based, inter alia, on specific military security issues.
- Specific issues, such as modernization of the existing framework versus development of new mechanisms, identifying potential new elements in a new regime and updating existing instruments, are essential and must be dealt with when the time is right and within the appropriate format.
- Constant developments in military matters necessitate a fundamental modernization of conventional arms control.
- The strong commitment of the participating States to full implementation and further development of arms control agreements is essential for enhancing military and political stability within the respective areas; the positive trends of cooperation, transparency and predictability need to be gradually strengthened.

The above-referenced approaches, assumptions and principles may enable interested parties to make progress in moving them closer to peace and security throughout the area of application of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

United Nations A/70/165

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**Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly**

# Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

During the reporting period, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held two meetings. The thirty-ninth ministerial meeting was held in Bujumbura from 1 to 5 December 2014, while the fortieth meeting was held in Luanda from 1 to 5 June 2015. The two ministerial meetings were organized by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), in its capacity as secretariat of the Committee.

During these two ministerial meetings, the Committee reviewed the political and security situation in Central Africa and proposed specific recommendations on actions to be taken to address the prevailing security questions on the Committee's agenda. During its fortieth session, the Committee reviewed with concern the situation in Burundi and the Central African Republic and adopted appeals in this regard (see annexes II and III).

The Committee assessed progress achieved in the development of an integrated strategy on counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa, based on the road map adopted by the Committee at its thirty-third ministerial meeting, held in Bangui from 5 to 9 December 2011.

The special theme chosen for the thirty-ninth meeting revolved around the Boko Haram issue, given the increasing impact of the activities of the Nigeria-based terrorist group on Central African States. After the ministerial debate, the meeting concluded with the adoption of the Bujumbura Declaration on addressing the threat posed by Boko Haram (see annex I).

* A/70/150.

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The Committee discussed progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the June 2013 Yaoundé Summit on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, including the inauguration of the Interregional Coordination Centre and the handing over of the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and encouraged member States to increase their efforts to fully operationalize these institutions.

The Committee discussed the consequences of poaching and the illicit wildlife trade for the subregion and reviewed member State initiatives to address this growing phenomenon, including a high-level meeting co-organized by Gabon and Germany on the sidelines of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly and the convening of an international conference on the issue in the Congo.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and ECCAS updated the Committee on the status of the signature and ratification of legal instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation in the subregion, including the Kinshasa Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty.

During the fortieth meeting, the Committee examined the recommendations of the inter-agency strategic review of UNOCA, expressed its support for the reinforcement of the capacity of UNOCA and encouraged the States members of the Committee to advocate for the adoption of the recommendations in the relevant United Nations organs.

The forty-first ministerial meeting is scheduled to be held in Libreville before the end of 2015.

# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 69/73, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", the General Assembly welcomed the efforts of the Standing Advisory Committee to address cross-border security threats in Central Africa. The General Assembly further reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further sustainable peace, stability and development in the subregion.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly also expressed its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his support to the Committee, welcomed the role played by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), and strongly encouraged the States members of the Committee and international partners to support the work of the Office. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the assistance needed by the Committee to ensure the success of its regular biannual meetings. It also called on him to submit to the General Assembly, at its seventieth session, a report on the implementation of resolution 69/73.

3. The present report is submitted in response to the above request and covers the activities carried out by the Committee from September 2014 to August 2015.

# II. Activities of the Committee

4. The thirty-ninth ministerial meeting of the Committee was held in Bujumbura from 1 to 5 December 2014, and the fortieth ministerial meeting in Luanda from 1 to 5 June 2015. Both meetings were attended by Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

5. The following entities also participated as observers in one or both ministerial meetings: the African Union; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Department of Political Affairs; the United Nations Office to the African Union; the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa; the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa; the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB); the United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB); the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); and UNOCA.

6. During the thirty-ninth meeting, the regional coordinator for counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa was invited to make a presentation on terrorism, given the special theme related to Boko Haram. During the fortieth meeting, the Committee examined the recommendations of the inter-agency strategic review of UNOCA.

7. The main issues on the agenda of the Committee and its activities during the period under review, as facilitated by UNOCA in its capacity as the secretariat of the Committee, are set out below.

## A. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

8. The Committee continued to serve as a forum for developing a shared understanding of the peace and security challenges in Central Africa and of collective approaches for addressing them. In particular, the Committee examined developments within each country while also reviewing the principal cross-border security challenges across the subregion.

9. In particular, the Committee reviewed the impact of Boko Haram's activities on Cameroon and Chad; the activities of other armed groups, such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and those active in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; the peace process and political transition in the Central African Republic; electoral processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and the humanitarian and human rights situation in the subregion as a result of those different crises. The Committee also reviewed issues related to counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons; maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea; and transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking and poaching.

10. Regarding Boko Haram, the Committee, during its thirty-ninth session, adopted the Bujumbura Declaration (annex I), in which it expressed its solidarity with Central African States affected by Boko Haram; firmly condemned attacks by Boko Haram in northern Cameroon; noted the serious impact of the group's activities in Cameroon and Chad; proposed that the Boko Haram issue be included in the agenda of the next ECCAS summit of Heads of State; and requested my Special Representative for Central Africa to bring the issue to the attention of the Security Council. Following presentations by my Special Representative for Central Africa to the Security Council on 10 December 2014 and 11 June 2015, the Security Council adopted presidential statements in which it requested UNOCA to continue to support, as appropriate, the States of the Lake Chad Basin region to address the impact of the threat on peace and security, including the political, socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the subregion (S/PRST/2014/25 and S/PRST/2015/12).

11. During the fortieth meeting, the Committee noted the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council, on 29 January 2015, to deploy the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat Boko Haram as well as ongoing efforts related to the operationalization of the Task Force. The Committee recognized the engagement of the African Union, ECCAS and the Lake Chad Basin Commission as well as other partners in this regard. The Committee welcomed the convening in Yaoundé, on 16 February, of an extraordinary Summit of Heads of State of the Council of Peace and Security of Central Africa devoted exclusively to the Boko Haram issue and the expression of solidarity and support for Cameroon and Chad demonstrated by Central African States at the Summit. The Committee also noted the initiative by ECCAS Heads of States to convene a joint ECCAS-Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summit for the purposes of developing a common approach among Central and West African States to addressing the threat posed by Boko Haram. On 25 May 2015, the headquarters of the Task Force was formally established in N'Djamena. On 3 June, an extraordinary meeting of the ECCAS Defence and Security Commission reviewed the ECCAS draft road map on the fight against Boko Haram. On 11 June, the Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission adopted the strategic concept of operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force. Meanwhile, on 15 June, there were three

coordinated suicide bombings against the police headquarters and the police academy in N'Djamena, leaving 34 people dead, including four attackers, and more than 100 injured. While Boko Haram had not claimed responsibility for the attacks, it was presumed that the group was responsible.

12. The Committee reviewed the situation in the Central African Republic as well as the regional impact of the crisis. During the thirty-ninth meeting, the Committee welcomed the establishment of the international mediation led by the ECCAS-appointed mediator, the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, with the support of the African Union Special Envoy for the Central African Republic, Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, and my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA, Abdoulaye Bathily; the signing of a cessation-of-hostilities agreement in Brazzaville on 23 July 2014; and the transfer of authority from the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic to MINUSCA.

13. During the fortieth meeting, the Committee noted the holding, from January to March 2015, of grassroots consultations at the prefecture level, as well as the successful conclusion of the Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation, held from 4 to 11 May 2015, which was chaired by my Special Representative for Central Africa, on behalf of the international mediation and at the request of the authorities. At the conclusion of the fortieth meeting, the Committee adopted the Luanda Appeal on the Central African Republic (annex II), which recognized the critical role played by ECCAS in resolving the crisis in the country; welcomed the outcomes of the Bangui Forum, including the signature of the Pacte républicain pour la paix, la réconciliation nationale et la reconstruction en République centrafricaine and the agreements between the Government and armed groups; and invited partners to assist in the urgent provision of necessary financing for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities and elections.

14. During the fortieth meeting, the Committee also reviewed the situation in Burundi and adopted the Luanda Appeal on Burundi (annex III), expressing concern at the political, security and humanitarian situation in the country, welcoming the nomination of the former Head of State of Chad, Goukouni Weddeye, as the ECCAS Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, and requesting ECCAS to support subregional and international efforts to resolve the crisis in Burundi.

15. The Committee also recommended the following measures to promote stability in the subregion: concerted action to tackle the security and humanitarian impact of Boko Haram's activities; the ratification of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components that Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention); the signature and ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty; and continuing development of the regional strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa.

## B. Implementation of the road map for counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa

16. At its thirty-third ministerial meeting, held in Bangui in December 2011, the Committee adopted the Declaration on a road map for counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa (see A/67/72-S/2012/159, annex,

attachment I). Further to a request by member States for United Nations support, UNOCA, in partnership with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and in consultation with ECCAS, initiated a process to convert the road map into a comprehensive strategy. In December 2012, in Brazzaville, a workshop was organized on the sidelines of the thirty-fifth ministerial meeting of the Committee, during which a regional network of experts on counter-terrorism was established. During the meeting, a road map was elaborated, in conformity with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and adopted. The road map foresees a series of thematic workshops to address critical issues, necessary for the elaboration of an integrated strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa.

17. UNOCA, in collaboration with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, has supported the development of the integrated strategy through the organization of a series of workshops in collaboration with host countries in the subregion. The first two workshops in the series were held in 2014. During the current reporting period, the third workshop, on human rights and the prevention of violent extremism, was held in Luanda from 24 to 26 February 2015. The fourth workshop, on money laundering and terrorism financing, was held in Libreville from 19 to 20 May 2015. During the thirty-ninth and fortieth ministerial meetings, the regional coordinator for the United Nations integrated strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa informed the Committee about the workshops that had been held to advance the development of the integrated counter-terrorism strategy.

18. The Committee took note of the remaining activities in the development of the integrated strategy on counter-terrorism. These include the last thematic workshop in the series, on judicial capacities, scheduled to be held in Yaoundé in September 2015; a meeting of experts to finalize the integrated strategy document and elaborate the action plan; and the presentation of the strategy and action plan, for adoption at the forty-first ministerial meeting of the Committee, to be held in Libreville. In the meantime, the Committee recommended that member States remain committed to the development of the integrated strategy.

## C. Cross-border insecurity: armed groups, including Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army

19. Boko Haram served as the special theme for the thirty-ninth meeting, which included a presentation from the Regional Coordinator on the root causes of terrorism in the region. UNOCA briefed the Committee on the increasing activities of Boko Haram and consequences for affected populations, further to an assessment mission it led in October 2014 to Cameroon and Chad, pursuant to the recommendations of the thirty-eighth ministerial meeting. During follow-up discussions at the fortieth meeting, UNOCA also informed the Committee about the joint diplomatic tour of Boko Haram-affected countries in the Lake Chad Basin and Benin undertaken by my Special Representatives for Central and West Africa in April 2015. At the time, they met with the Presidents of Benin, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, the Prime Minister of Cameroon and the President-elect of Nigeria.

20. During both ministerial meetings, member States discussed the deteriorating security, socioeconomic, humanitarian and human rights situation due to the group's

activities in the affected areas of Cameroon and Chad. The Committee also reviewed the various initiatives of States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission plus Benin, undertaken at the political and technical levels, to mobilize collective military action against the group. These efforts included those to operationalize the Multinational Joint Task Force, further to the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council, on 29 January 2015, to deploy the force. States members of the Committee subsequently adopted the Bujumbura Declaration.

21. During the reporting period, UNOCA also briefed the Committee on the current operating picture of LRA, including its recent activity in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNOCA provided an update on its own initiatives, undertaken in close coordination with the African Union, to coordinate implementation of the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of LRA (see S/2012/481, annex). These included the conduct of joint diplomatic missions to affected countries and the organization of biannual coordination meetings.

22. ECCAS highlighted the strength and activities of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Forces démocratiques alliées and the Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and other groups active in the region, as well as efforts by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to combat those groups.

## D. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

23. At the thirty-ninth meeting, the Committee discussed progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Yaoundé on 24 and 25 June 2013. This included the inauguration, on 11 September 2014, of the Interregional Coordination Centre, to be managed jointly by ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, in cooperation with the host country, Cameroon. The Committee also took note of the handing over of the Regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, from the Congo to ECCAS, on 20 October 2014. The Committee recognized these developments as important advances in establishing a regional information-sharing architecture in the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. The Committee encouraged member States to increase their current efforts to fully operationalize these institutions in line with the decisions of the Yaoundé Summit.

## E. Poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking

24. The Committee examined the environmental, economic and security consequences of poaching and the illicit wildlife trade in Central Africa, including possible links between these activities and the illicit financing of armed groups. The Committee reviewed the initiatives of member States and partners in addressing this growing phenomenon. These efforts included the co-organization by Gabon and Germany of a high-level meeting held on the sidelines of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly on 26 September 2014; the convening of an international

conference, pursuant to the recommendations of the thirty-ninth meeting of the Committee, in Brazzaville from 27 to 30 April 2015; and the signing of a framework of cooperation agreement between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and ECCAS on the issue of illicit wildlife trafficking.

25. During the fortieth meeting, Gabon briefed the Committee on the status of the implementation of the recommendations related to the illicit trade in wildlife detailed in a letter from the Permanent Representatives of Gabon and Germany to the Secretary-General (see A/68/553, annex). Gabon noted that informal consultations within the United Nations among the Group of Friends against illegal wildlife trafficking, led by Gabon and Germany, were ongoing with regard to the development of a draft General Assembly resolution on the subject.

## F. Update on activities of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

26. The Committee was briefed by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and ECCAS on the status of implementation of existing legal instruments for disarmament and non-proliferation. The Centre highlighted the importance of ratifying the Kinshasa Convention. It noted that five States members of the Committee had submitted their instruments of ratification or accession to the Kinshasa Convention. The Regional Centre encouraged the remaining members of the Committee to follow suit, as entry into force required six ratifications.

27. The Centre informed the Committee that it had finalized a guide on the harmonization of national laws of the States parties to the Kinshasa Convention. The Centre and ECCAS shared with the Committee the different activities that they had organized to assist member States to fulfil and implement the Kinshasa Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty.

28. The Centre also announced the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty on 24 December 2014, noting that 130 States had signed the treaty, of which 67 had submitted their instruments of ratification, including one State member of the Committee. The Centre encouraged the member States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.

29. Finally, the Centre informed the Committee of its activities in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), by which the Council sought to prevent access to weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors. The Centre indicated that seven States members of the Committee had submitted an initial report to the relevant United Nations body on the subject and encouraged the remaining members of the Committee to follow suit. The Centre advised the Committee that it remained at the disposal of the Committee with regard to the provision of technical expertise related to the ratification of legal instruments and the reinforcement of capacity on issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation in Central Africa, in line with its mandate.

## G. Cooperation with international and regional organizations, with the support of United Nations entities

30. The active participation of ECCAS and the African Union, as well as the presence and contributions to the work of the Committee of various United Nations entities, including the United Nations Office to the African Union, UNODC, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, BNUB and MENUB, provided invaluable assistance to the efforts of the Committee to address peace and security challenges in Central Africa.

## H. Strategic review of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

31. During the fortieth meeting, the Committee examined the recommendations of the inter-agency strategic review of UNOCA, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2015/339). In particular, the Committee discussed reinforcing the UNOCA political affairs section and addressing its mobility challenges, in order for the mission to be able to focus on the following four strategic priorities: (a) strengthening good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation; (b) supporting United Nations and regional and subregional initiatives on peace and security; (c) enhancing coherence and coordination in the work of the United Nations in the subregion on peace and security; and (d) strengthening the capacity to advise the Secretary-General and United Nations entities in the subregion on significant peace and security developments.

32. The Committee expressed its strong support for the recommendations of the strategic review and requested Angola and Chad, as current members of the Security Council, to mobilize support for the recommendations among other Council members. In addition, the Committee requested permanent missions of Central African States to the United Nations to support the recommendations of the strategic review in the General Assembly, including in the Fifth Committee. The Committee also expressed its gratitude to UNOCA for its efforts as secretariat of the Committee.

# III. Administrative and financial matters

33. The Committee recalled the 2009 Declaration on the Trust Fund of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (Libreville Declaration), adopted at its twenty-eighth meeting, and reviewed the financial status of the Trust Fund. The Committee noted that no additional contributions had been received since 2013 and expressed its deep concern over the lack of voluntary contributions, despite commitments made by the States members of the Committee. The Committee urged member States to fulfil their financial obligations so as to ensure the continued effective functioning of the Committee, in keeping with the spirit of the Libreville Declaration.

# IV. Conclusions and recommendations

34. The Secretary-General welcomes the Committee's continuing efforts to consolidate peace and security in Central Africa, in collaboration with subregional and regional organizations. He encourages the Committee to further strengthen its collaboration with ECCAS and to enhance cooperation with the United Nations system, the African Union as well as other regional and subregional organizations and international partners.

35. The ongoing activities of Boko Haram continue to have destabilizing humanitarian, human rights and security consequences for Central African States, particularly Cameroon and Chad. In this context, the Secretary-General welcomes the adoption by the Committee, at its thirty-ninth meeting, of the Bujumbura Declaration, in which it inter alia requested that ECCAS Heads of State remain seized of the issue. The Secretary-General also welcomes the continued efforts by regional and subregional actors and partners to address the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency in a holistic and integrated manner and encourages ECCAS and ECOWAS to hold the planned summit of Heads of State. The Secretary-General also welcomes the ongoing development of the integrated strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of arms in Central Africa. He encourages States members of the Committee, with support from UNOCA, the United Nations Centre for Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, to finalize the integrated strategy and to consider its adoption during the Committee's forty-first ministerial meeting. In line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the Secretary-General reiterates the importance of ensuring that all counter-terrorism measures comply strictly with international human rights and humanitarian law and the rule of law. This imperative relates both to operations conducted by the Multinational Joint Task Force and the finalization of the integrated strategy for the region.

36. The situation in the Central African Republic and the impact of that crisis on the local population and the subregion remain matters of serious concern. The adoption by the Committee of the Luanda Appeal on the Central African Republic is a strong signal of the subregion's continuing engagement on the issue. The Secretary-General supports the Committee's call upon Central African stakeholders and partners to ensure the successful implementation of the conclusions of the Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation. In particular, he highlights the urgent need to mobilize the requisite resources to ensure the conduct of the elections and implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, and calls on Member States to support the country at this critical juncture. In that regard, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Central Africa, Abdoulaye Bathily, will continue to advocate for support from Member States of the region, in close collaboration with his Special Representative for the Central African Republic, Babacar Gaye.

37. The Secretary-General remains seriously concerned about the deteriorating situation in Burundi. He welcomes the adoption by the Committee of the Luanda Appeal on Burundi and supports subregional contributions to ongoing regional and international initiatives to return the country to stability. The Secretary-General supports the Committee's call for all parties to renounce violence and engage in constructive dialogue. Following the adoption of the communiqué on Burundi at the 515th meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council at the level of

Heads of State and Government, on 13 June 2015, the Secretary-General requested his Special Representative for Central Africa to offer good offices in Burundi in support of regional efforts to reduce tensions, reach consensus on the way forward and help Burundians to peacefully settle their differences. The Special Representative for Central Africa will work closely with the Joint International Facilitation Team, comprising the African Union, the East African Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The Secretary-General expressed his deep gratitude to his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit, for his tireless efforts to impartially facilitate the dialogue among Burundian stakeholders during May and June of 2015.

38. The Secretary-General commends Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo and Gabon for the ratification of the Kinshasa Convention, which remains an indispensable tool in the fight against the proliferation of small arms, light weapons and armed violence in Central Africa. He calls on States members of the Committee that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention to trigger its entry into force.

39. The Secretary-General encourages States members of the Committee, as well as ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, to remain committed to fully implementing the decisions of the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Yaoundé on 24 and 25 June 2013. He reiterates his call to Member States and partners to provide the necessary resources to ensure the full operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa. UNOCA, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa, will continue to assist countries in the region in order to achieve these objectives.

40. The Secretary-General remains concerned by continuing reports of poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking and their links to the financing of armed groups in Central Africa. He recognizes the Committee for its active engagement on the issue and commends Gabon and the Congo for their high-level efforts to increase awareness, mobilize international action and strengthen regional cooperation in this context. The Secretary-General reiterates his call to States members of the Committee and ECCAS to develop a coherent subregional strategy to address this disturbing phenomenon, with the support of UNOCA, UNODC and other partners.

41. The Committee urgently requires additional funding to continue its work. The Secretary-General therefore urges all States members of the Committee to fulfil their financial commitments so that the Committee can continue to serve as an essential confidence-building mechanism among the States of the subregion.

42. The Secretary-General reiterates the importance of maximizing the potential of UNOCA to continue to serve as an important tool in the area of preventive diplomacy in Central Africa, which will help the Office to improve its assistance to the Committee. In that regard, he highlights the recommendations of the strategic review of UNOCA, contained in his report of 14 May 2015 to the Security Council on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of UNOCA (S/2015/339). The Secretary-General welcomes the support expressed by the Security Council for the recommendations of the strategic review (S/PRST/2015/12) and encourages all Member States to express similar support.

43. The Secretary-General is grateful for the support provided by the Department of Political Affairs, UNOCA and his Special Representative for Central Africa to the functioning of the Committee. He also thanks the United Nations Office to the African Union, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, MENUB, as well as other United Nations entities in Central Africa, for their participation in the meetings of the Committee. He looks forward to the conclusions of the forty-first ministerial meeting of the Committee, to be held in Libreville.

**Annex I**

[Original: French]

## The Bujumbura Declaration on the threat posed by Boko Haram to peace, security and stability in Central Africa, adopted at the thirty-ninth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Bujumbura, Burundi on 4 December 2014

**We,**

**The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa,**

Meeting in Bujumbura, Republic of Burundi, on the occasion of the thirty-ninth ministerial meeting of this Committee,

Concerned by the repeated and growing attacks of Boko Haram in the north of the Republic of Cameroon,

Taking into account the negative economic, social and humanitarian consequences that the activities of this group pose to the Republic of Cameroon and the Republic of Chad,

Recognizing the fact that the affected countries are forced to divert significant resources, originally intended for their economic and social development, in the fight against this group,

Considering the risk of destabilization of the entire subregion of Central Africa,

Conscious of the need to rid Africa of the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism that no circumstances can justify,

Noting that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or specific group,

Referring to the various United Nations resolutions on terrorism and violent extremism, including resolution 2178 (2014) adopted at the Summit of the United Nations Security Council devoted to threats against peace and security resulting from acts of terrorism, held on 24 September 2014,

Stressing the need for the effective implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,

Referring to the conclusions of the Summit of the African Union Council of Peace and Security on the phenomenon of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, held on 2 September 2014,

**Condemn** in the strongest terms the terrorist activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria and the north of the Republic of Cameroon;

**Condemn** the unjustifiable ambition of this group to create an Islamic caliphate in the area of the Lake Chad Basin;

**Strongly support** all initiatives undertaken by the countries of the region, the Commission of the Lake Chad Basin, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the United Nations and the international community in seeking solutions to this problem;

**Welcome** the measures being implemented by the Republic of Cameroon and the Republic of Chad in the fight against this armed group;

**Encourage** the Federal Republic of Nigeria to intensify its military actions in order to secure its border with the Republic of Cameroon and the Republic of Chad;

**Invite** States members of the Committee to increase their vigilance concerning the risk of the spread of terrorism and all forms of extremism in Central Africa;

**Urge** the international community to increase its support for the fight against this armed group;

**Emphasize** the need for a global and integrated approach in the fight against terrorism and armed groups in Central Africa;

**Propose** that this issue be placed on the agenda of the next summit of Heads of State of the Economic Community of Central African States;

**Request** the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to submit this matter for consideration by the Security Council.

## Annex II

[Original: French]

### The Luanda Appeal on the situation in the Central African Republic, adopted at the fortieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Luanda, Angola on 4 June 2015

**We,**

**The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa,**

Meeting in Luanda, Republic of Angola, on the occasion of the fortieth ministerial meeting of this Committee,

After reviewing the geopolitical and security situation in the Central Africa subregion,

**Express** our concern regarding the political, security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic;

**Recall** the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the decisions of the African Union Council of Peace and Security on the situation in the Central African Republic;

**Recognize** the declarations and decisions from the various summits of the Economic Community of Central African States, including the recent sixteenth ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government, held on 25 May 2015 in N'Djamena, Republic of Chad;

**Praise** the tireless efforts of the international community, including the United Nations, through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which makes every effort each day to rescue people and alleviate their suffering;

**Pay tribute** to the African Union, through the African Union Mission for the Central African Republic and Central Africa (MISCA), for its continued commitment to the process of resolving the crisis in the Central African Republic;

**Reaffirm** the commitment of our States to supporting the transition process and becoming more actively involved in all the actions for the resolution of the crisis in the Central African Republic;

**Express** our gratitude to the international mediator, President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo, for his personal engagement to resolve the crisis in the Central African Republic, as well as to the former Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States, President Idriss Deby Itno of the Republic of Chad, for his efforts;

**Reaffirm** our commitment to the Brazzaville Agreement on the cessation of hostilities;

**Welcome** the holding, from January to March 2015, of grass-roots consultations followed by the convening, from 4 to 11 May 2015, of the National Reconciliation Forum in Bangui, led by Abdoulaye Bathily, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, which brought together all the nation's living forces, including the authorities of the transition, political parties, civil society and religious and armed groups;

**Celebrate** the signing by all parties, of the Republican pact for peace, national reconciliation and reconstruction in the Central African Republic, the signing between the transitional Government and armed groups of the agreement on principles of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and integration into the uniformed elements of the Central African Republic as well as the signing of the agreement for the demobilization of child soldiers;

**Urge** the various actors to respect the commitments made at the National Forum in order to allow a return to a climate of peace and security, necessary for the holding of free, credible and transparent elections;

**Renew** our appreciation to bilateral and multilateral partners for their multifaceted assistance in the efforts for the return to lasting peace in the Central African Republic and invite them to fulfil their pledges of funding and mobilize additional resources to finance the deficit in the elections budget and cantonment operations of former combatants in the context of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation;

**Express** our gratitude to the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States as well as regional and international partners for their continued support to the Central African Republic.

## Annex III

[Original: French]

### The Luanda Appeal on the situation in Burundi, adopted at the fortieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Luanda, Angola on 4 June 2015

**We,**

**The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa,**

Meeting in Luanda, Republic of Angola, on the occasion of the fortieth ministerial meeting of this Committee,

After reviewing the geopolitical and security situation in the Central Africa subregion,

**Declare** ourselves concerned by the political, security and humanitarian situation in the Republic of Burundi;

**Express** our sympathy to the people of Burundi following the acts of violence that have led to the massive movements of population and the loss of human lives;

**Call on** all Burundian stakeholders to restrain themselves from any act of violence that is liable to further contribute to the already tense political and security situation;

**Express** our gratitude to the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Said Djinnit, for his continuous efforts deployed, with the support of the East African Community, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and the African Union, towards promoting dialogue among the different Burundian actors and ask them to continue this initiative;

**Welcome** the nomination of Goukouni Weddeye, the former Head of State of Chad, as Special Envoy of the Economic Community of Central African States for the Great Lakes Region, in general, and Burundi, in particular, during the Conference of the Heads of States of the Economic Community of Central African States on the Situation in Burundi, held in N'Djamena, Republic of Chad, on 25 May 2015;

**Welcome** the decision of the Heads of States of the East African Community to postpone the elections as a necessity in order to allow for the re-establishment of a peaceful climate, indispensable for the holding of free, credible and transparent elections;

**Request** the Economic Community of Central African States to support subregional and international initiatives towards ending the crisis in Burundi;

**Reaffirm** the commitment of our States to supporting Burundi and to be actively involved in all actions undertaken towards ending the crisis;

**Invite** the international community to continue providing its support to the people of Burundi in its search for peace;

**Solicit** the support of the States of the region and the international community in the mobilization for the return of the refugees.

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Item 73 (b) of the provisional agenda*
**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

# Follow-up to the International Year of Human Rights Learning

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/173 on the follow-up to the International Year of Human Rights Learning, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at its seventieth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

In the present report, the Secretary-General outlines human rights education, training and learning developments and activities in the follow-up to the International Year that were facilitated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from July 2013 to June 2015, in particular in the context of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing). United Nations initiatives such as the International Year, the World Programme and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training represent the consensus of the international community on the key contribution of effective human rights education, training and learning to the realization of human rights.

* A/70/150.

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# I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 62/171, the General Assembly decided that the year commencing on 10 December 2008 should be proclaimed the International Year of Human Rights Learning; called upon Member States to intensify their efforts to promote human rights learning and education at the local, national and international levels; and encouraged cooperation at all levels and with all relevant stakeholders. Subsequently, the Assembly considered the matter at its sixty-third, sixty-fourth and sixty-sixth sessions, adopting its resolutions 63/173, 64/82 and 66/173, respectively.

2. At its sixty-eighth session, the General Assembly considered the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the International Year (A/68/207,, which provided information on initiatives carried out up to June 2013 to achieve the objectives of the Year. In its resolution 68/173, the Assembly encouraged Member States to expand on efforts made beyond the Year and to consider devoting the financial and human resources necessary to further design and implement international, regional, national and local long-term human rights learning programmes of action, in coordination with relevant stakeholders. It called upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council to support, cooperate and collaborate closely with all relevant stakeholders in efforts to develop, in particular, the design of strategies and programmes of action for human rights learning at all levels. The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its seventieth session, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

3. In the present report, the Secretary-General outlines human rights education, training and learning developments and activities from July 2013 to June 2015 that were facilitated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in follow-up to the International Year, in particular in the context of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

# II. Global coordination of the World Programme for Human Rights Education

4. The World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing) was proclaimed by the General Assembly resolution in its 59/113 as an ongoing global initiative, structured in consecutive phases, in order to advance the implementation of human rights education programmes in all sectors. The first phase (2005-2009) was dedicated to the integration of human rights education into primary and secondary school systems. The related plan of action (see A/59/525/Rev.1) was adopted by the Assembly in July 2005 (see resolution 59/113 B). The second phase (2010-2014) focused on human rights education in higher education and human rights training for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel. The related plan of action (see A/HRC/15/28) was adopted by the Human Rights Council in September 2010 (see resolution 15/11).

5. In September 2013, the Human Rights Council adopted its resolution 24/15, by which it dedicated the third phase of the World Programme to strengthening the implementation of the first two phases and promoting human rights training for media professionals and journalists. Accordingly, OHCHR prepared, in consultation

with all stakeholders, a related plan of action (see A/HRC/27/28 and Corr.1), which was adopted by the Council in September 2014 (see resolution 27/12).

6. In the same resolution, the Council requested OHCHR to prepare and submit an evaluation report on the implementation of the second phase of the World Programme, based on national evaluation reports. The report (A/HRC/30/24) provides an overview of action undertaken at the national level, as reported by States, with regard to human rights education in higher education and human rights training for civil servants, law enforcement officials and the military. It also draws conclusions from the information reviewed and provides recommendations for furthering human rights education and training, building on the progress made during the second phase. The report will be considered by the Council at its thirtieth session, in September 2015.

7. As part of its coordination role, OHCHR has continued to promote the World Programme and to assist Member States in national implementation. As with previous phases, a booklet containing the plan of action for the third phase will be published in 2015 and made available in the six official languages of the United Nations. OHCHR has also maintained and further expanded its web pages on the World Programme and related initiatives in English, French and Spanish,[1] and has continued to interact with a wide range of Governments, United Nations entities, other intergovernmental organizations, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations.

8. Upon the initiative of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, OHCHR and the Commission jointly organized the International Conference on Human Rights Education and Training for the Civil and Public Service, held in Dublin in December 2013. The Conference showcased good practice in this area, and encouraged the design and implementation of human rights training for civil servants in accordance with the World Programme. Immediate outputs of the conference included the preparation of a compendium of existing practices implemented or supported by national human rights institutions and the publication of a conference report depicting practices and lessons learned with regard to supporting and implementing human rights training for civil servants.[2]

9. OHCHR participates in the International Contact Group on Citizenship and Human Rights Education, which is coordinated by the Council of Europe and seeks to ensure close cooperation among related regional and international initiatives, including regular sharing of information and implementation of joint activities. Other members of the Group are the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, the European Commission, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Organization of American States, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

[1] See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Pages/HREducationTrainingIndex.aspx.

[2] The conference report is available from www.ipa.ie/pdf/IHRC_Post_Conference_Report_web.pdf.

## III. Tools and resources

10. OHCHR has continued to develop and disseminate selected human rights training and education materials and methodologies based on good practice. Together with various intergovernmental organizations, OHCHR finalized the web resource *The Right to Human Rights Education*, a compilation of commitments to human rights education and training that States have made in various international and regional forums.[3] The web resource was launched at the twenty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council, in September 2014. In addition, OHCHR is finalizing an updated edition of *Human Rights Training — A Manual on Human Rights Training Methodology*, published in 2000.

11. OHCHR continued to maintain and expand its Resource Collection on Human Rights Education and Training,[4] a specialized section of the OHCHR Library in Geneva that contains more than 3,800 human rights education and training materials from around the world, and its database on human rights education and training,[5] which is aimed at facilitating the sharing of information on learning programmes and educational institutions worldwide. As of the end of June 2015, the database contains information on 1,205 institutions and 432 human rights training programmes. During the reporting period, the OHCHR Library responded to 251 human rights education queries from governmental and non-governmental entities, including academic institutions, and provided related reference services and other guidance. In addition, during the period 2013-2014 the Library registered 27,632 visits to its online catalogue and added 2,368 new items to its collection.

12. OHCHR also maintains an extensive collection of translations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in more than 440 languages and dialects, all available through the OHCHR website. In addition, a collection of print and other material pertaining to the Declaration includes more than 440 items such as books, multimedia materials and a broad range of commemorative items.[6]

13. During the period 2013-2014, OHCHR distributed over 130,000 copies of its printed publications worldwide, in all official United Nations languages. Bulk orders came mainly from Algeria, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, Chad, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mexico, Qatar, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, the United States of America and Yemen, among other nations. While many of these publications directly benefited external audiences, they also supported human rights training activities as well as advocacy work performed by OHCHR field presences and other entities in the United Nations system. OHCHR also contributed a broad range of human rights-related publications to libraries and resource centres. During the reporting period, the most requested OHCHR printed publications included fact sheets, policy and methodological materials and training and education materials such as *Evaluating Human Rights Training Activities: A Handbook for Human Rights Educators*; *National Human Rights Institutions: History, Principles, Roles*

[3] Available from www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/Listofcontents.aspx.

[4] See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Pages/Collection.aspx.

[5] See http://hre.ohchr.org/hret/.

[6] For resources pertaining to the Declaration, see www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Introduction.aspx.

*and Responsibilities*; and *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Training Guide* (the English language version and the translations of the *Training Guide* were published using new technology, in an electronic format accessible to persons with disabilities). OHCHR continued to widen its online reach by making all its publications available on the OHCHR website.[7]

## IV. International programmes and support

14. OHCHR continued to develop and implement, jointly with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the annual Human Rights Orientation Programme for Diplomats, which is aimed at enhancing government officials' understanding of human rights, related United Nations mechanisms and bodies, and OHCHR. More than 170 diplomats from United Nations permanent missions participated in the two editions of the programme held in Geneva in September 2013 and September 2014, respectively.

15. OHCHR continued to deliver human rights training for military, police and civilian personnel deployed to United Nations peace operations. In cooperation with the Integrated Training Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, OHCHR designed and delivered human rights training courses for senior leaders of United Nations peace operations, including special representatives of the Secretary-General, force commanders, police commissioners and their deputies. Human rights components in United Nations peace operations regularly delivered human rights training for uniformed and civilian personnel in peace operations at the mission level. For example, in 2014, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and OHCHR implemented a training programme on human rights and the protection of civilians for 400 military and police personnel from contingents of the African Union-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic, to support its transition to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, and OHCHR developed and delivered a human rights training course for the Department's Standing Police Capacity as well as specialized training courses on investigating conflict-related sexual violence.

16. OHCHR also continued to strengthen the capacity and skills of United Nations human rights personnel, both of human rights components of peacekeeping missions and of OHCHR headquarters and field presences, through the organization and delivery of training courses on human rights functions or on specific issues, on a regular or ad hoc basis, including on:

(a) Designing, managing and delivering human rights training;

(b) Human rights and humanitarian action;

(c) Human rights monitoring and investigations;

(d) Monitoring and protecting economic, social and cultural rights;

(e) Monitoring and investigating conflict-related sexual violence;

(f) Human rights report writing;

[7] OHCHR publications, including relevant electronic versions, are available from www.ohchr.org/EN/PublicationsResources/Pages/Publications.aspx.

(g) Human rights indicators;

(h) Indigenous rights and the treaty bodies;

(i) Gender integration;

(j) Human rights and macroeconomic policy.

17. For example, during the reporting period, OHCHR contributed to the increased effectiveness of the human rights training programmes and courses designed and delivered by United Nations human rights staff by training 42 staff members on human rights training methodology during two editions of its regular course on designing, managing and delivering human rights training. This highly interactive course focuses on OHCHR human rights training methodology and touches upon a wide range of issues, including training design, training delivery such as presentations and facilitation) and related techniques, and training needs assessment and evaluation, as well as adult learning theory.

18. OHCHR continued building the capacity and expertise of indigenous and minority representatives on the United Nations system, instruments and mechanisms dealing with human rights in general and issues of particular relevance to indigenous peoples and minorities. In 2014, through its indigenous and minority fellowship programmes, OHCHR trained 42 indigenous and minority representatives to use international human rights mechanisms to advocate for their rights, and 10 residential indigenous and minority fellows received on-the-job training at OHCHR headquarters and field presences, including in Cameroon, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nigeria and the Russian Federation. In addition, the 2013 Fellowship Programme for People of African Descent brought together fellows from Australia, Costa Rica, France, Panama, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States. Building on their participation in these programmes, several fellows subsequently pursued initiatives at the national level to enhance participation in decision-making. Examples of such initiatives include advocacy for the inclusion of minority rights in constitution-making processes; awareness-raising among religious minorities; engagement in national legislative and policy reform processes; and the provision of advice and expertise on the rights of indigenous peoples to government entities. OHCHR also issued a new guide for advocates on promoting and protecting minority rights through United Nations and regional mechanisms.

19. OHCHR grants, the participation of specialized OHCHR staff and other contributions have supported international human rights education activities organized by other actors. In 2013 and 2014, for example, OHCHR supported Equitas-International Centre for Human Rights Education in strengthening the capacity of some 180 human rights educators from around the world through the participation of a specialized OHCHR staff member as a resource person in the Equitas annual International Human Rights Training Programme and through the provision of a large number of OHCHR publications for distribution among the educators. OHCHR staff also regularly participate as speakers in side events during Human Rights Council sessions and other gatherings on human rights education organized by civil society and other stakeholders.

20. The Assisting Communities Together (ACT) Project, a joint initiative of OHCHR and the United Nations Development Programme, awarded grants to national and local civil society organizations in support of grass-roots human rights education

initiatives. From 1998 to 2013, OHCHR awarded 753 grants to a wide variety of civil society organizations in 46 countries and facilitated the implementation of a broad range of activities. These grants enabled non-governmental organizations, local associations, academic institutions, professional groups and other civil society institutions to carry out human rights workshops and training courses, awareness-raising activities and education programmes tailored for groups in situations of vulnerability, and also to contribute to the promotion of human rights by the dissemination of specialized material and the creation of information centres. The activities undertaken in this context covered various thematic areas and issues including, inter alia, racial discrimination and minority rights, gender equality and women's human rights, the rights of the child, human rights in the administration of justice, and human rights and health. The eighth phase (2012-2013) of the project ended in 2013.[8]

21. OHCHR also promoted human rights awareness for the general public through the commemoration of Human Rights Day every 10 December, the date on which the General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The slogan for Human Rights Day in 2014 was "Human Rights 365", which encompassed the idea that every day is human rights day. OHCHR launched a social media campaign to raise public awareness of human rights and to encourage membership of, and support for, the international human rights community.[9] In addition, in December 2013 OHCHR launched the global "Free and Equal" campaign against homophobia and transphobia, which promotes greater respect for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. The campaign has reached more than a billion people and attracted high-profile support from celebrities and public figures in all regions of the world. A video, entitled *The Welcome*, is one of the most widely watched human rights videos of the United Nations, with over 2 million online views and multiple television broadcasts.[10]

22. In 2015, to commemorate the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, OHCHR launched the "#Reflect2Protect" campaign to give visibility to the work of all human rights defenders who helped to define this agenda and worked to defend women's human rights and promote gender equality. On this occasion, OHCHR released a series of 12 short video profiles of women's human rights defenders on social media and the #Reflect2Protect website. Each video highlighted one of the 12 areas of concern for the Beijing Platform for Action, namely, poverty, education, health, violence against women, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights, the media, the environment and girls. The campaign also encouraged all people who defend and support the human rights of women and fight against inequality based on gender to send or tweet a picture of themselves reflected in a mirror using the hashtag #reflect2protect, to share their reflection on their role as human rights defenders of women and gender equality.[11]

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[8] For more information on each phase of the ACT project, see www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/ACTProject/Pages/ACTProjectIndex.aspx.

[9] For more information on Human Rights Day 2014, see www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/HRDay2014/Pages/HRD2014.aspx.

[10] For more information on the Free and Equal campaign, see www.unfe.org/.

[11] For more detailed information on the #reflect2protect campaign, see www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/WHRD/Pages/WomenHRDefenders.aspx.

23. Activities were also organized to combat the negative and discriminatory perception of migrants and to draw attention to the situation of persons with albinism. For example, on International Migrants Day in December 2013, OHCHR and the International Labour Organization jointly launched a series of cartoons which sought to challenge myths and encourage a more positive public perception of migrants. The cartoon collection reached over 13,000 people on Facebook, and the tweets generated an estimated 825,000 potential impressions on Twitter (i.e., the number of times a tweet reached Twitter accounts).[12] As a result of awareness-raising activities undertaken by OHCHR, the situation of persons with albinism received greater attention in the media and in recommendations issued by human rights mechanisms. On the recommendation of the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly proclaimed 13 June as International Albinism Awareness Day.[13]

## V. Regional and national programmes and support[14]

24. Human rights education and training are a regular feature of the work of OHCHR field presences and human rights components of peace missions, often in collaboration with relevant sections at OHCHR headquarters. A non-exhaustive list of activities that were conducted from July 2013 to June 2015 includes human rights training programmes for various audiences such as security forces, law enforcement officials, journalists, legal professionals and civil society, the provision of advisory services to Governments on the development of human rights education programmes and awareness-raising activities aimed at the general public.

25. OHCHR frequently conducts human rights capacity-building programmes, including training, for law enforcement officials and other justice administration personnel as part of its overall efforts to strengthen accountability and the rule of law and to combat impunity. In 2014, for example, the Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism, under the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, continued its implementation of a long-term project on training and capacity-building for law enforcement officials on human rights. Nine Member States expressed interest in receiving training under the project, and training was first rolled out in Nigeria in early 2015. OHCHR also developed a series of practical human rights reference guides for use by States. These initiatives help to ensure that, while States are taking various measures to prevent acts of violence and safeguard the security of those within their jurisdiction, law enforcement officials prioritize human rights considerations when carrying out their work.

26. In Guatemala, OHCHR carried out a comprehensive strategy to strengthen national capacity to combat impunity. By continuing to support the justice sector, it increased the application of international human rights standards in judicial resolutions. In Cambodia, OHCHR convened judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court clerks

[12] For more information on International Migrants Day 2013, see www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Migration/Pages/InternationalMigrantsDay2013.aspx.

[13] For more information on OHCHR's awareness-raising activities on the situation of persons with albinism, see http://albinism.ohchr.org/.

[14] For more detailed information on activities referred to in the present section, see www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRReport2014/WEB_version/ and www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRReport2013/WEB_version/.

and prison and police officials through a series of five regional judicial round tables, which fostered cooperation and improved the delivery of justice. In Mozambique, the OHCHR Regional Office for Southern Africa conducted capacity-building for the national human rights institution which enabled it to carry out its first systematic monitoring of prisons and a detention centre. In Tajikistan, OHCHR organized a workshop on traditional justice and an expert consultation on military justice. The joint advocacy of the Office, the Ombudsman and civil society ultimately led to the establishment of a pilot mechanism to monitor closed institutions. In April 2014, OHCHR released a report on the situation of prisons in Tunisia, which led to the establishment of a national working group to implement its recommendations and the development of human rights training programmes for prison officials. Human rights courses were also included in the training of legal professionals in, inter alia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cambodia, Georgia, Kenya and Mexico.

27. In late 2014 and early 2015, the OHCHR Regional Office for South America trained groups in situations of vulnerability on the use of international human rights mechanisms to denounce human rights violations, as an integral part of its overall commitment to curtail impunity. In Chile, 50 members of civil society organizations were trained in January 2015 on issuing alternative reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These training courses help to ensure the participation of civil society in the United Nations human rights mechanisms, enhancing the enforcement of human rights.

28. OHCHR addresses sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking and related exploitation, including through education and related capacity-building programmes. For example, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Guatemala submitted an OHCHR study on wrongful gender stereotyping by the judiciary in cases of sexual and gender-based violence to the judicial school, which consequently agreed to integrate the issue of gender stereotypes into the curriculum of the judiciary. As a co-lead entity of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict established under Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), OHCHR continued to provide capacity-building assistance to the national authorities of the Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Somalia and South Sudan, addressing accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. OHCHR established a committee of national experts on conflict-related sexual violence in Côte d'Ivoire which sensitized members of the armed forces and the population on the prevention of, and responses to, sexual violence. OHCHR also delivered a three-day training course for human rights components of peacekeeping missions and fact-finding bodies on investigating conflict-related sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan (Darfur), enhancing their capacity to investigate allegations of these serious violations. The OHCHR Regional Office for Europe contributed to raising awareness on the linkages between trafficking and human rights by delivering training modules on the human rights-based approach to identifying and interviewing victims.

29. Furthermore, in 2014, in efforts to enhance equality and counter discrimination, OHCHR provided assistance to Governments with regard to increasing the awareness of national actors and developing their capacity to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. For example, in El Salvador and Nicaragua, 50 national human rights institutions officers were trained by the OHCHR Regional Office for Central America on the implementation of an

intervention protocol for cases of racial discrimination. OHCHR also organized events for specific groups in Belarus, Jordan, the Russian Federation and Tunisia on freedom of religion or belief, including the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred in the framework of the follow-up to the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, adopted in 2012. In Mauritania, OHCHR organized two seminars on cultural diversity which were aimed at, inter alia, improving understanding of the rights of migrant workers and their families in the context of the promotion of tolerance and social justice. In the Republic of Moldova, OHCHR supported a network of parents of children with disabilities in their efforts to achieve inclusive education and contributed to the development of awareness-raising campaigns.

30. In response to widespread human rights abuses targeting individuals on account of their sexual orientation or gender identity, OHCHR field presences conducted training for civil society with a focus on the monitoring of human rights violations against LGBT persons. For example, OHCHR engaged in capacity-building activities for members of Cambodian civil society organizations working on the rights of LGBT persons by organizing training sessions on human rights monitoring and fact-finding.

31. As part of its strategy on widening the democratic space, OHCHR built the capacity of national actors to address human rights issues concerning the media. In 2014, OHCHR organized a workshop with the Ministry of Communication in Madagascar which facilitated the development of a draft media code, as well as a workshop in Togo to promote the professionalization of the media. The OHCHR Regional Office for West Africa launched a training project for journalists on, inter alia, human rights and human rights reporting. The OHCHR Regional Office for the Middle East worked with OHCHR Tunisia to organize a workshop which strengthened the capacity of civil society actors and journalists in the prevention of incitement to hatred, based on international human rights norms and mechanisms on freedom of expression.

32. OHCHR also organized workshops for women human rights defenders from the Asia-Pacific region in relation to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to encourage women's political participation and give visibility to the work of women human rights defenders. OHCHR held introductory workshops in Madagascar for women leaders on human rights which resulted in an increased understanding of the use of national, regional and international mechanisms to protect women's rights.

33. In Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala and Mexico, OHCHR field presences launched public information campaigns (including radio programmes in Colombia) and a mentoring scheme for civil society actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and enhanced the capacity of civil society organizations in remote regions in Tajikistan. In Georgia, OHCHR translated and disseminated human rights training materials into local languages and organized a summer school on human rights for lawyers and civil society representatives.

34. OHCHR also provided support to countries including, inter alia, Colombia, Jamaica, Kenya, Madagascar, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Timor-Leste and Tunisia, to integrate or enhance human rights in their national education systems by training teachers, developing teaching materials on human rights and providing

advice on policy papers. The Government of Rwanda developed a national strategy on the topic, and human rights education was included in the school systems in Jamaica, Timor-Leste and Tunisia. Five universities in the Russian Federation (in Moscow, Perm and Kazan) integrated a human rights master's programme into their curricula, and Egerton University in Kenya introduced a human rights class as a common course for all undergraduate students. In Colombia, steps were made to start implementing the national public policy on human rights education, and the training of trainers and educational authorities now incorporates a human rights-based approach. In Madagascar, the Military Academy approved the integration of human rights modules into the curricula of the Academy.

35. In 2014, OHCHR provided advice, training and support to staff of national human rights institutions in Angola, Benin, Botswana, Comoros, the Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe on human rights standards and the Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles), handling complaints and monitoring and investigations.

36. OHCHR is also conducting human rights training in several African countries for independent electoral commissions, parliamentarians, civil society actors and media professionals in view of scheduled local elections. This training is aimed at promoting transparent and participative societies based on dialogue, pluralism and tolerance.

37. OHCHR provided human rights education and training to various stakeholders in order to integrate human rights into development and the economic sphere in relation to global economic and social issues. OHCHR led training on monitoring economic, social and cultural rights in, inter alia, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and for the judicial protection of those rights in Guatemala, Madagascar and Montenegro, among other countries. In Mexico, OHCHR increased the awareness of State institutions and non-State actors about international obligations in relation to economic and social rights. OHCHR also undertook an ambitious process to develop a fairer, more effective system of domestic law remedies in cases of gross human rights abuses involving business enterprises. This involved capacity-building in a number of countries with a view to supporting effective implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

## VI. Conclusions

38. **The present report provides an overview of the work undertaken by OHCHR to facilitate human rights learning at all levels, internationally, regionally and nationally. OHCHR has also submitted to the thirtieth session of the Human Rights Council a report (A/HRC/30/24) on the human rights education and training initiatives undertaken nationally in the context of the second phase (2010-2014) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education which is complementary to the present report.**

39. **United Nations initiatives, such as the International Year of Human Rights Learning, the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, represent the commitment to human rights education by Governments at the international**

level and their consensus on the key contribution of human rights education, training and learning to the realization of human rights. However, it is important to bear in mind that international programmes can only support, and not replace, committed, vigorous and concerted national action, in the best interest of each nation.

40. Indeed, effective human rights education, by empowering right-holders to claim their rights and by developing the capacity of duty-bearers to meet their obligations to protect, respect and fulfil human rights, is a powerful strategy towards many ends: the prevention of human rights violations and violent conflict, the enhancement of people's participation in decision-making processes within democratic systems, the promotion of people-centred sustainable development and, overall, the development of just societies in which all human rights of everyone are valued and respected.

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**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

# Human rights and cultural diversity

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 68/159 on human rights and cultural diversity. In paragraph 22 of that resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the implementation of the resolution, including efforts undertaken at the national, regional and international levels regarding the recognition and importance of cultural diversity among all peoples and nations in the world and taking into account the views of Member States, relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. The Secretary-General was requested to submit the report to the Assembly at its seventieth session.

Following the General Assembly's request, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights invited States and United Nations agencies to submit written information on efforts undertaken in this regard and informally consulted with non-governmental organizations. The present report provides a summary of the information received. The submissions from Governments focus on measures to promote cultural diversity and to protect the cultural rights of national minorities.

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# I. Introduction

1. On 18 December 2013, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/159 on human rights and cultural diversity. In paragraph 22 of that resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the implementation of the resolution, including efforts undertaken at the national, regional and international levels regarding the recognition and importance of cultural diversity among all peoples and nations in the world and taking into account the views of Member States, relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and to submit the report to the Assembly at its seventieth session. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) requested submissions from States and relevant organizations on the efforts undertaken;. as at 2 July 2015, 13 replies had been received from States, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had submitted a response. The present report contains a summary of the submissions received.

# II. Summary of information received from Governments

## Argentina

2. Argentina described its efforts to incorporate gender and intercultural perspectives into its human rights agenda in order, among other objectives, to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment. The National Statute on Education 26.206, the National Statute on Audiovisual Communication Services 26.552 and Statute 26.994 adopting a new Civil and Commercial Code all aim at advancing intercultural development. It is noteworthy that the participation of indigenous peoples in the drafting and approval of these laws was ensured throughout.

3. Through a constitutional amendment in 1994, the rights of indigenous peoples were recognized at the national and provincial levels. Since 2003, the Government has promoted intercultural dialogue with indigenous peoples with a view to enabling the collaborative development of public policies. The National Council for Indigenous Participation was established in 2004 in order to ensure the effective participation of indigenous people in the design and implementation of public policies.

4. As stipulated in National Statute 26.160 and other laws, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs conducted a mapping exercise of indigenous communities in Argentina, which identified 647 such communities. The Government considers this mapping of indigenous communities a necessary step towards guaranteeing their rights to land and territory. In addition, a Community Strengthening Programme makes legal aid services available, with a view to strengthening community organization and building the capacity of indigenous communities to develop strategies that will enable them to successfully claim indigenous territories. Furthermore, Statute 26.160 has helped to prevent the eviction of a number of indigenous communities, and its judicial application has generated a rich body of jurisprudence on indigenous land issues.

5. The submission also provided information on national efforts to recognize and promote Afro-Argentine culture, including through the adoption of a National Plan

on Discrimination, the institution of a national day to celebrate the Afro-Argentine, and the issue of two publications on Afro-Argentine culture and human rights.

## Armenia

6. In its submission, Armenia focused on one of its policy priorities, namely promoting the preservation, dissemination and development of the cultural heritage of national minorities. It described initiatives to promote cultural diversity, including a web portal with a separate web page on the culture of national minorities residing in the country, on national and regional programmes and on legislation and international instruments relating to the cultural rights of national minorities.

7. The budget of the Ministry of Culture provides, every year, for a number of cultural events relevant to national minorities. The Ministry collaborates with associations and non-governmental organizations representing national minorities and assists in the organization of exhibitions, concerts and other cultural events. Regular meetings and consultations are held with the representatives of associations for national minorities at which joint activities, major cultural challenges affecting national minorities and proposals for improving the legislative framework are discussed.

8. For the purpose of supporting the cultural life of national minorities, a number of initiatives were launched between 2011 and 2012, including a procession themed "Armenia is my home", the making of a film entitled "Assyrians in Armenia" and a concert to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Coordinating Council for National and Cultural Organizations of National Minorities. Armenia's submission further noted that all historical, architectural, cultural and religious buildings are under the protection of the Government, irrespective of their ethnic or religious association, with the partial reconstruction of the Jewish settlement and the area around the Yeghegis cemetery.

9. With regard to literature and journalism, various minority communities have published non-fiction books concerning their communities, and the works of leading Kurdish, Yezidi, Assyrian, Russian and other ethnic minority language writers have been and are still included in the collections of the national authors' club known as the "Literary Armavir". An extensive collection of books in Greek, Kurdish, Russian and other ethnic minority languages is kept and used in the National Library and other educational institutions.

## Azerbaijan

10. Azerbaijan emphasized its enhanced ability to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue by virtue of its membership of both European and Islamic organizations. Intercultural and interfaith dialogue has become a foreign policy priority, and Azerbaijan has played a leading role in various international initiatives and events. From 18 to 20 May 2015, Azerbaijan hosted the third World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in cooperation with UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the World Tourism Organization, the Council of Europe and the Islamic Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization. The Forum addressed key issues such as soft power and diversity in the modern age, the role of religious

leaders in countering violent extremism and promoting religious pluralism, engaging youth in intercultural dialogue and the responsibilities of Governments and international organizations in building trust between cultures.

11. Azerbaijan cooperates with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and is a member of its Group of Friends. The proposal of the Government of Azerbaijan to host the seventh United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum in Baku in 2016 has been endorsed by the Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends. In addition, Azerbaijan supports intercultural dialogue within the Council of Europe, and it identified the strengthening of culturally diverse societies, on the basis of mutual respect and understanding, as one of its four priorities during its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, from May to November 2014. Thus, Azerbaijan hosted the First Platform Exchange on Culture and Digitization (2014), the exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue (2014) and the Celebrating European Heritage Days event (2014).

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

12. The response of Bosnia and Herzegovina underscored its religious, ethnic and cultural plurality and its commitment to maintaining that diverse make-up, noting that strengthening multicultural dialogue is an important tool for fostering tolerance as well as unity in diversity.

13. The Commission for the Preservation of the National Monuments, established under the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is responsible for the protection of national monuments, an authority it exercises through criminal proceedings in cases involving illegal or substandard construction work and poor maintenance of national monuments. The destruction of or damage to objects of cultural heritage is an offence under the penal codes of Bosnia, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Srpska and Breko District.

14. The submission also referred to an initiative jointly implemented by UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Development Programme (and funded under the Culture and Development window of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund), which produced a compendium of translations of all international conventions relating to the protection of cultural heritage. In addition, the Interfaith Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina published a glossary of religious terms.

15. The reconstruction of many of the historical and religious monuments destroyed during the conflict between 1992 and 1995 has been completed or is under way, including the Old Bridge in Mostar, the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka, Zitomislici Monastery, Bascarsija (the old town of Sarajevo) and Piehan Convent.

## Cuba

16. In its submission, Cuba characterized neo-liberal globalization, together with unequal access to information and the presumption of cultural hegemony by developed countries, as serious threats to the realization of cultural rights, the

preservation of cultural identities and cultural diversity. It noted that the market alone could not guarantee the preservation and promotion of cultural identities, and it stressed the overall importance of public policies over private sector interests.

17. In Cuba, the State promotes education, culture and science in all their forms and guarantees freedom of artistic creation and the defence of Cuban cultural identity. In addition, the Government ensures the preservation of Cuban cultural heritage, the artistic and historical patrimony of the nation and the protection of national monuments, taking into account local traditions and universal values. Cuba has consistently championed a culture without chauvinism, xenophobia or ideological prejudices. It has prioritized the protection of the living heritage and promoted universal culture, together with a strong defence of the national cultural identity, including the preservation of people's access to their universal heritage.

18. Cuba reiterated its commitment to supporting the efforts of the United Nations system, including UNESCO, to preserve and promote the cultural diversity of all peoples and nations. It affirmed that strengthening multilateralism is essential for the promotion and protection of cultural diversity.

## Guatemala

19. The Constitution of Guatemala recognizes the right to culture and cultural identity and provides for the protection of culture, cultural heritage, art, folklore and traditional crafts. With approximately 40 per cent of its population belonging to Mayan, Garifuna or Xinka ethnic and cultural minorities and 24 languages being spoken in the country, Guatemala has established institutions and developed policies, legislation and programmes aimed at meeting the aspirations of its people. In particular, a large number of institutions (including the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala, the Guatemalan Fund for Indigenous Development and the National Council for the Implementation of the Peace Accords) work to promote respect for cultural diversity in many areas, including language, education, health and religion, with a focus on indigenous peoples.

20. With regard to public policy, a national policy on coexistence and the elimination of racism and racial discrimination seeks to ensure the existence of a pluralist State in which indigenous people are recognized as citizens with equal rights and are not subjected to discrimination or economic exclusion. A national policy on the advancement and integral development of women and the Equal Opportunities Plan (2008-2023) promotes the development of indigenous Mayan, Garifuna, Xinka and Mestizo women in all aspects of their economic, social, cultural and political life.

21. The Law on the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of the Nation, the National Education Law providing for bilingual education in areas where the indigenous population predominates, and the National Language Law, which facilitates access to public services in the language of each linguistic community, are examples of legislative measures to promote cultural diversity. In the area of education, these measures are supported by programmes developed by the Ministry of Education, one of which focuses on educational and teacher training materials in national languages.

## Kazakhstan

22. Kazakhstan noted in its submission that it had not experienced religious conflicts despite the coexistence of 18 different denominations, traditions and cultures. The strong relationships between ethnic groups in Kazakhstan and the space afforded to them have enriched the culture. Each ethnic group has the right to form its own cultural centres and Sunday schools, which contribute to the revival and development of languages, cultures, traditions and customs. To date, the country has 900 ethnic and cultural associations and 190 Sunday schools. It also noted that, as a constitutionally secular, democratic State, and in its capacity as a member of the Human Rights Council, Kazakhstan works closely with international organizations in the implementation and protection of human rights.

23. With the objective of amending the legal framework, a new law regulating religious activities and the functioning of religious associations was promulgated in October 2011. Since 2003, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, hosted by Kazakhstan in its capital city, has taken place every three years as part of efforts to preserve and strengthen interreligious harmony and freedom of religion. The State is also taking proactive measures to identify and eliminate any violations of the law in this area, including through remedial measures.

24. Kazakhstan affirmed its commitment to religious plurality and to respecting the human rights and freedoms of all citizens irrespective of their religious affiliation, including freedom of conscience and religion.

## Mauritius

25. In its submission, Mauritius noted that, with a view to facilitating intercultural exchange between communities resident in Mauritius, the Government has organized a number of celebrations, including the Spring Festival, Eid al-Fitr, Divali and Christmas annually, with each community having a public holiday for its respective festival. Assistance is provided to cultural organizations in holding cultural events during Maha Shivaratri, Kavadi, Varusha Pirappu, Divali and Christmas.

26. The main objectives of the Ministry of Culture are, among other things, to foster societal harmony (by consolidating pluralism, promoting creativity and celebrating cultural values), to preserve and foster cultural values, to promote cultural interaction and to encourage the development of a dynamic artistic and cultural sector. In relation to language, the Ministry of Culture organizes national drama competitions in 10 languages, featuring approximately 130 clubs and 1,500 artists. The cultural centres maintain trust funds that support the promotion and preservation of languages in their written and oral forms while encouraging linguistic development.

27. Mauritius has concluded agreements on cultural exchange which seek to build cultural ties with other countries, and the visits made by artists, resource persons and experts as a result of these agreements help to strengthen shared cultural ties and heritage.

## Mexico

28. The response of Mexico highlighted the priority given to preserving and promoting indigenous cultures through numerous policies and programmes. Among the country's 15.7 million indigenous inhabitants, there are 68 indigenous groups and a corresponding number of indigenous languages listed in the Languages Catalogue of the National Institute of Indigenous Languages. The number of indigenous language speakers is 6.6 million, the most commonly spoken languages being Nahuatl, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec and Otomi. As indicated in Mexico's submission, many indigenous languages are at risk of extinction.

29. The National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples has formulated a special programme for indigenous peoples (2014-2018), which aims at improving the living conditions of the indigenous population and providing access to higher-quality education, health, housing and basic infrastructure. Government policy on the protection of indigenous peoples consists of several strategic pillars, namely indigenous people's rights, including access to justice, social and economic development, participation in indigenous society and the preservation and promotion of indigenous culture as part of the national heritage.

30. In 2014, the Secretariat for Public Education and the National Institute of Indigenous Languages took a number of measures to promote bilingual education, including the publication of materials in different languages. At the institutional and programmatic levels, the National Council for Culture and the Arts, the National Institute of Fine Arts, the Ibero-American General Secretariat and the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural Diversity Programme help to promote cultural diversity by encouraging the staging of exhibitions and other events accessible to the public and through intercultural and international artistic exchanges, cinematography, literature, festivals, music, radio, the facilitation of indigenous artistic expression and the safeguarding of cultural sites.

## Saudi Arabia

31. The submission of Saudi Arabia provided information on activities conducted to promote cultural diversity locally, regionally and internationally. The objective of these activities is to protect the culture of Saudi society and its authentic values and to encourage greater appreciation for other cultures. One example is the annual National Festival on Heritage and Culture, which showcases national heritage alongside modern culture, an important theme being the preservation of national heritage. There are also a number of cultural and artistic associations, such as the Saudi Arabia Association for Culture and Arts (established in 1975), the Association of Decorative Arts, the Association of Saudi Theatre Actors and the nationwide literary clubs.

32. With a view to promoting dialogue between peoples of different religions and cultures, several conferences have been organized, including the Geneva Conference convened by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in September 2009, which led to the creation of the King Abdallah Centre for Dialogue between Religions in Vienna in November 2012. The Centre aims at fostering mutual understanding, peaceful coexistence and tolerance among peoples through dialogue in which the differences between religions and cultures are viewed as a vehicle for

mutual understanding rather than confrontation. Saudi Arabia also hosted the fourth extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit Conference, on Islamic solidarity, in August 2012. The Summit made recommendations on the development of educational curricula that would integrate authentic Islamic values on mutual understanding, tolerance and dialogue, combating extremism on religious pretexts and promoting moderation. OIC held its fifth session under the theme "The Istanbul Process: from adoption to implementation" and discussed how to ensure the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief".

33. The submission referred to article 8 of the Basic Law of Governance (Al-Nidham al-Assassiy Lil-Hukm), which provides that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is founded on justice, *shura* (consultation) and equality in accordance with Islamic Sharia. Article 39 of the Information Policy Document issued by ministerial decision on 9 September 1982 confirms that freedom of expression in the media is guaranteed, provided that Islamic and national values and objectives are respected.

## Serbia

34. Serbia indicated in its submission that its policy regarding culture is based on freedom of expression in cultural and artistic creativity, the autonomy of cultural entities, open access to cultural content for the public, respect for European cultural and democratic values, national tradition and diversity of cultural expression. The cultures of national minorities are considered to be an integral part of the national culture, and the objective is to foster all of them individually, as well as generally in the broader context.

35. The promulgation of the Law on the National Councils of National Minorities was significant in raising public awareness in Serbia regarding the preservation and promotion of minority cultures and languages. Minorities can now elect their own national councils, through which they exercise their right to self-determination in matters of culture, education, information and the official use of their languages and scripts. In terms of participation in decision-making on all issues of interest to national minorities, under the Law on Culture, the national councils representing national minorities implement their respective cultural policies and can participate in the decision-making process or take independent decisions on matters relating to their culture.

36. In relation to discrimination, including discrimination against minority groups, the submission referred to the Serbian strategy for prevention of and protection against discrimination, together with its dedicated action plan for the period 2014-2018, which seeks to address discrimination in a comprehensive manner. The strategy details interventions to eliminate discrimination, particularly against ethnic minorities, small religious communities, women, persons with disabilities and children.

37. Serbia pays special attention to international cooperation, particularly from the perspective of affirming, promoting and sharing cultural values. In this context, it issued an open call for applications to participate in a project for the translation of its major literary works into foreign languages. Serbia also facilitates participation in numerous festivals, visits and exchanges, particularly those organized under

bilateral cultural cooperation programmes, and has concluded many cooperation agreements in the fields of culture, education, science and sports with countries which are home to minority language populations.

## Spain

38. In its response, Spain notes that, in accordance with the Spanish Constitution, the central Government and the autonomous communities are deeply committed to respecting cultural and linguistic pluralism. Cultural policy is decentralized and is therefore implemented by local entities, although the central authorities retain a coordinating role.

39. The legal and policy framework provides for the protection of minorities (under Statutes 2/2009 and 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of non-citizens in Spain and their social integration), gender equality (under Statute 3/2007 on the equality of women and men), pluralism in the media, and intercultural activities at the international level. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, in collaboration with other ministries, has developed plans and national strategies to promote tolerance and combat inequality, resulting in the Plan on Human Rights (2008), the Strategic Plan on Citizenship and Integration (2011-2014), the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma People in Spain (2012-2020) and the National Plan of Action for Social Inclusion (2013-2016). A number of institutions with a similar objective have been established, including the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia, the Institute for Roma Culture and the Jewish People's Network of Spain.

40. The Constitution stipulates that the education system must strive for the full development of every human being and respect fundamental human rights and freedoms as well as the principles of democracy and harmony. Consequently, recent reforms of the education system, including the General Statute on Education (2006) and the General Statute on the Improvement of Quality in Education (2013), have promoted equality and non-discrimination and sought to enhance respect for different cultures. Within this broad policy framework, the Ministry of Education has launched specific initiatives to ensure social integration, equal opportunities and intercultural dialogue, including the establishment of the Resource Centre for Cultural Diversity and Education, the Programme on Portuguese Language and Culture and the Spanish-Moroccan Conference on Cultural Cooperation.

## Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

41. The submission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela highlighted the constitutional recognition of cultural diversity, which defines the Venezuelan nation as multi-ethnic and multicultural. The Constitution also provides for the protection of emblematic national crafts and industries. The submission noted the importance of promoting the participation of indigenous peoples in public life and protecting indigenous culture. In this regard, the objective of the 2009 Statute on the Cultural Heritage of Peoples and Communities is to support the identification, preservation, restoration and dissemination of the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples and communities. The Organic Law on Culture seeks to protect cultural creativity

through the preservation of Spanish and the indigenous languages and the promotion of publications and popular culture.

42. The submission referred to various other initiatives, such as the Cultural Heritage Registry (a community-led process for the identification and registration of cultural information through a system of codification and archiving) and the "Cultural Mission: Heart Inside" project which is a multisectoral programme to incentivize popular participation and guarantee access to culture. The National System of Popular Culture, established in 2011, supports collaboration between the public institutions working in the area of culture and individual institutions involved in popular culture.

## III. Summary of information received from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

43. UNESCO underscored the importance of preserving the rich diversity of cultures and of fostering their wide diffusion as an integral part of its efforts to contribute to lasting peace and security and to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Considering that cultural diversity is "an essential requirement for sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations",[1] UNESCO has advocated for the recognition of culture, including the diversity of cultural expressions, as an enabler and driver of sustainable development within the context of the negotiations for the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

44. As the United Nations specialized agency with an explicit mandate for culture, UNESCO has focused its action on helping to safeguard and transmit cultural assets, practices and values, including those of minorities, thus reflecting the wide spectrum of cultures in its diversity, and on advocating for their integration into international law and national legislation, policies and programmes. To that end, it has encouraged the ratification of its international conventions, which reflect the wide spectrum of culture in its diversity, and provided technical support and policy advice for their implementation. In response to situations where cultural diversity is targeted during conflicts, UNESCO has mobilized the international community and its United Nations partners, denouncing those attacks as a violation of human rights, highlighting the links between culture and security and advocating for the integration of cultural heritage protection in United Nations peace-keeping and humanitarian operations.

45. A central part of the UNESCO agenda relates to the operationalization of Global Citizenship Education, in formal and non-formal systems, through policy guidelines, pedagogical guiding tools and curricula and regional workshops in order to foster solidarity, respect and mutual understanding. A milestone was the Second UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education (Paris, 28-30 January 2015) under the theme "Building peaceful and sustainable societies: preparing for post-2015". Other important outputs related to the UNESCO Toolkit on revision/adaptation of curricula, school textbooks and other learning materials, the joint UNESCO-OHCHR booklet on the third phase of the World Programme for

[1] See article 2, para. 6, Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

Human Rights Education and the "Teaching Respect for All" tools, counteracting discrimination and violence in and through education.

46. UNESCO promotes freedom of expression and media development as enablers of freedom of cultural expression and access to cultural diversity for all. A syllabus published on intercultural journalism was aimed at influencing the curricula of schools of journalism and relevant educators. UNESCO organized the annual Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue Week to foster citizens' awareness of media and information literacy as instruments to stimulate intercultural dialogue. The Week is a joint annual international initiative of UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the University Network Cooperation Programme on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue, and it is part of the Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy, which has over 300 member organizations from all regions and cultures.

47. With a focus on city-level action, UNESCO promotes inclusion through its International Coalition of Cities against Racism — a 10-year old partnership furthering collaboration and the sharing of experiences. The promotion of the diverse range of cultural expressions and heritage of city dwellers as well as of interculturality in city life is among the commitments advanced by the International Coalition. UNESCO also conducted a training course on human rights mainstreaming in September 2014 in collaboration with the City of Graz for members of the European Coalition. It is currently reconsidering its strategy of engaging with local governments, prompted by the emphasis on city-level inclusion in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda as well as by discussions on the preparations for the 2016 United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development — Habitat III.

## IV. Conclusion

48. **The majority of the submissions received reflect on legal and policy frameworks and interventions aimed at identifying and protecting groups at particular risk and on initiatives to promote cultural sensitivity. Many stress the important role that intercultural exchanges at the local, national and international levels play in supporting these objectives. Inequality and discrimination are described as threatening societal cohesion and harmony. Crucially, there is broad recognition that combating inequality and discrimination is critical to upholding cultural diversity, with many submissions providing information on measures to raise the standard of living of indigenous communities and encourage their participation in cultural life.**